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REPORT FROM THE EDITOR

Thurman Warriner has a job that baffles people

LIVING in Chesterfield, Thurman Warriner is a long way from the sea that he loves so much. But creeks and estuaries, fishing villages and yachting centres—the settings for *The Golden Lantern*, our new serial which begins on page 7—are all familiar to him. Warriner is an inveterate walker and, in the past year, he has tramped with his twelve-year-old son Johnny along most of the Devon coast. Warriner also likes boats, but he has no illusions about his seamanship. "I don't sail," he says. "I go marine motoring."

From his flat at the top of one of Chesterfield's oldest houses he can see miles of rolling countryside. "And," he says, "there are more oak beams in my flat to knock my head against than in the average 'period' cottage."

Except for the war years, Warriner has been writing continuously since 1936 and now has ten novels and more than two hundred short stories to his credit. At the moment his output is two novels a year and two stories a month.

Many of the people he meets in Chesterfield still can't quite get used to his profession. When he tells them that he is a writer they are apt to reply: "Ah yes, but what do you do for a living?" Warriner, who is in his forties, can afford to be philosophical about it. "After all, this year I'm celebrating my professional coming-of-age."

ON the opening day of the trout fishing season Colin Hodgkinson waded into a stream near his Buckinghamshire home and deftly cast a fly over a rising fish. As he played the catch into his landing net he stepped into a deep hole, and chill water swirled over his wader tops. Hodgkinson felt neither the wet nor the cold for, as he tells in his life story which begins on page 9, he has lost both legs.

"The water didn't harm me," he says, "but it got into my tin legs. For weeks afterwards I walked around London sounding as if I had a nest of mice in my trousers."

Hodgkinson, a thirty-seven year old public relations consultant and television commentator, has conquered most of the hazards of life without legs. He plays golf, flies, goes riding, and enjoys gardening in his newly-bought country home. "The only things I find really difficult," he says, "are walking up or down hills, and trying to cross a sandy beach."

Each year he plays cricket for the fathers' eleven in the annual match against his stepson's school. "To even things up they make us play with cut-down bats," says Hodgkinson. "The first year I turned out I was asked if I wanted to wear pads. To comply with convention I put them on, but the first ball from the school's fast bowler hit the back of my legs. A resounding clang echoed across the ground. . . . As I told the headmaster, with a cut-down bat, tin legs and one duff eye, I think I give quite enough away to the boys."

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Free Speech

● **Choose your feathered friends wisely** ● **Punishing sailors with boredom**

● **Housework—the overrated pastime**

As a suburban market gardener and nurseryman, it infuriates me to see housewives laying out food scraps on open bird-tables.

It isn't the rarer birds that benefit but the belligerent pests like sparrows, starlings and woodpigeons, whose numbers are already a national problem.

Let us by all means have our nesting boxes for the tit family and encourage as much as possible such birds as swallows, martins and swifts.

But it's a difficult enough job trying to maintain the balance of nature in favour of man without well-meaning but misguided people building up future trouble through sheer sentimentality.—M. S., Middlesex.

Blooming Rarity

Compared with the tulip, or most other flowers for that matter, the orchid looks a poor sort of bloom to me. I know it has a rarity value, but is this a matter of soil or just nature's pig-headedness?—J. M., Nairn, Scotland.

"Some orchids need tropical conditions," says a horticulturist. "But many beautiful varieties like the cymbidium can be grown in ordinary greenhouses with little or no extra heating. Many people dislike orchids because they associate them with the types that eat insects in steaming jungles. But we haven't lost a gardener yet."

Protesting Cargo

The pack ice off Eastern Greenland has claimed many ships like the one abandoned by her crew and discovered undamaged eleven months later ("Strange Tales Of The Sea," April 6).

I was aboard the Norwegian sealer Quest in 1949 when thickening floes held us fast for a week. Eventually we slammed a path through sixty miles of ice, using dynamite and

desperate force and freeing two other ships at the same time.

We had a cargo of huskies, captured musk oxen and polar bears like the cub in the photograph. They voiced their disapproval of this "smash-and-shudder" trip by squealing, howling and growling the whole time.—G. Smith, Wolsey Avenue, Walthamstow, London.

Protected Palms

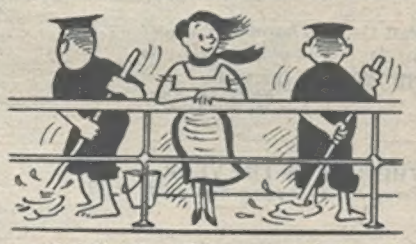
I was interested in F. J. Verrier's letter about boxers pickling their hands in brine to preserve their knuckles ("Free Speech," April 6).

My great-grandfather, who kept wicket for his village team in the 1880s, used to protect his hands against fast bowling on fiery pitches in rather a novel way. Every Saturday lunchtime he used to buy fourpennyworth of beefsteak, cut it into two exact portions, and place half in each wicket-keeping glove.

At the end of the day's play he gave it to his Staffordshire bull terrier as a weekly treat. I don't think fourpennyworth of beefsteak would be much protection these days.—J. C. Lashford, Crofton Road, Orpington, Kent.

Mariner's Task

When I sailed to India to join my husband's regiment, I used to lean on the ship's rail and watch the rolling waves while the other women passengers played games or sewed. One day the chief officer, who had been watching me for some time, came and asked



me to join the other women. He said that what I was doing used to be a sailors' punishment. But to me it was a pleasure.—Mrs. C. Thomson, Sleigh Drive, Edinburgh.

"This was one of many such punishments which used to be given on the spot for such minor offences as skylarking," says a National Maritime Museum official. "When I was a cadet I was once ordered to stand on the quarter-deck for an hour and shake my fist at every seagull which passed."

Coloured Imaginings

Like Loretta Powell ("Free Speech," April 6) I, too, imagine the days of the week running horizontally, but from right to left. They are coloured, too. Monday is reddish-brown and Saturday silver-grey, for example.

I have always assumed that they have some childish associations because the most vivid of all are Christmas Day (green and red) and Easter Day (bright yellow). I suppose that they are associated with the seasonal symbols of holly and baby chicks.—Miss B. M. Bartholomew, Gladwell Road, Bromley, Kent.

. . . My particular knack of visual memory is that if I want to refer back to a certain passage when reading a particularly enthralling novel I can always remember its exact position on a page even though I can't remember the number of the page or its context. I have done this so often that it is just as if that particular passage has been impressed on my mind by some extra sense.—Mrs. M. Roberts, Tremena Road, St. Austell, Cornwall.

"Memory develops in different ways," says a psychologist. "Some people can recall smells better than telephone numbers or faces better than names. One musician might remember a symphony by hearing it note by note in his mind, but another might read it from an imaginary score."

Throwing It Back

I would like to see some of the rejected typewritten work described by A., S. and J., of Birmingham ("Free Speech," April 6), and I would expect to find that their "dithering males" threw it out because of bad spelling, obvious erasures, careless transcription, or a combination of all three.

In my experience the competent shorthand-typist is rare indeed, and most of those masquerading under that description—particularly the married ones—have no qualms about presenting for signature work that would disgrace the average first-year student at a commercial college.—W. S., Kent.

Constructive Housewifery

I feel strongly about the comments on part-time parents made by J. T. H., of Bradford ("Free Speech," April 6).

I have no love for the sweep, dust and mop routine and feel that housework is an overrated pastime. I don't contemplate my line of spotless washing with pride in my ability, so I prefer to pay a housekeeper out of my earnings from a full-time job.

If I did what I disliked for the rest of my life, would my husband and two sons come home to a charming, contented and alert wife and mother?

I tried the housework angle for years without help. Now I still bake my own bread and attend to all the cooking and general organization of the home. Those are constructive. The rest, to me, is soul destroying.—Mrs. J. E. Newton, Langholm Road, East Boldon, Co. Durham.

John Bull pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech," and at the usual rates for photographs. Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to the John Bull Free Advice Service, whose experts answer questions by post

THE COVER

Here's an interesting point of law. A clear case of larceny, no doubt, but is it wise to prosecute? Sentiment may demand severe penalties . . . when he remembers how lovingly he tended those plants and how he used to boast about them at the office. But then prudence—and cover artist Critchlow—advise him not to press the charge. There is evidence that nothing quite brightens the house like a few tulips. And once his wife gets into the witness box. . . ! If only he were the sort of man who brings home an occasional bunch of flowers of his own accord!

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How odd. This happy lady with the roses writes novels with titles like
More Work For The Undertaker . . .
The Fashion in Shrouds . . .
***Tiger in the Smoke.* Yes . . .**

Yes . . . it *is* Margery Allingham! If you were to look in at her beautiful house in Essex, you might find her hard at work on chapter nineteen, but you wouldn't find her in tears or moodily firing a revolver.

And if there were something to celebrate, such as your visit, or her birthday, or a nibble from a film company — why, she'd offer you Martini. Real Martini, with the unique Martini flavour. Martini from a Martini bottle. Shall we call? What do you say, Miss Allingham?

Better drink

MARTINI

Sweet or Dry

It began with a letter—that invited me to meet death at Melhaven

THE GOLDEN LANTERN

by THURMAN WARRINER

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

WARREN CHALMERS'S letter came first-post on Wednesday, and it spoiled my breakfast. I seldom thought of Vanessa, even after six years, without a dry feeling in my mouth, and now, here was this letter from her husband . . . the last thing I would ever have expected to see on my breakfast-table.

I pulled the two sheets towards me and propped them against the coffee-pot:

The Golden Lantern,
Chanter's Wharf,
Melhaven.

September 23rd.

My Dear Cradford,

I hardly expect you to read this with much enthusiasm, coming as it does from a man you have every reason to dislike. I can only assure you that it is equally embarrassing for me to write in this

I hadn't expected to see a gun in her slim hand. "You'd better take it," she said. "You can bring it back tomorrow"

"Have you told the police?" Vanessa said in a low voice. "Not yet . . ." I replied

fashion, but I do need your help, desperately.

For some time I have been floundering deeper and deeper into a bog from which there seems no escape. I have no one but myself to blame for this, and in different circumstances I should take what was coming to me without whining. But others are now involved, and I can't carry on any longer without expert advice.

Our place here—The Golden Lantern—is a residential hotel. We bought it three years ago, and found Melhaven so much to our liking that we now live here most of the year. You may think it odd that I haven't asked you to stay with us, but the reason will be quite obvious when I explain the situation. You will be all right at the Dolphin. It's quite comfortable there, and the food's good.

Will you come down to Melhaven tomorrow, Wednesday, and meet me in the bar of the Dolphin at 8 p.m.?

If you should run into Vanessa, please do not on any account let her suspect that I have been in touch with you. This is of the utmost importance. Please destroy this letter when you have read it, and believe me when I say that this matter is literally one of life or death.

Sincerely yours,

Warren Chalmers.

I wondered what a man like Chalmers gets scared of. I should have thought he was too attached to his own pleasures and comforts ever to get mixed up in matters of life and death. I'd been told that he was a director of at least three North Country manufacturing companies, and besides that, he'd inherited a tidy fortune from his father. If ever a man merited the title of playboy, it was Warren, but two passions; boats and women, ruled the general drift of his life.

It gave me a bit of a lift now to see that letter on my breakfast-table. It was nice to know that the demi-god who'd married Vanessa needed my help—me, the crock with a shell splinter in his leg, the small-town lawyer he'd smiled at so patronizingly when Vanessa introduced us only three days before she sent back my ring.

I read the letter again, then burned it as Chalmers suggested. After that I sat thinking things over for a while. I was very reluctant to get myself mixed up in this business, whatever it was, but I knew I couldn't help myself. I didn't give a damn about Chalmers, but if Vanessa was in any way involved. . . .

There were one or two things I had to attend to that morning, but I managed to get away after an early lunch. It took six hours' hard driving to get to Melhaven. For the last few miles the road followed a wide, shallow valley, running close beside a rush-banked river. I crossed lazy creeks wreathed in evening mist, then came to a scattering of houses and a sloping street, with a fine church standing beside an acre of market-place. I looked for the sea but it wasn't there; only a broadening estuary, with old houses looking across a long, cobbled quay, and mud flats shining red under the sunset.

I found the Dolphin, parked the car, and went in. The saloon was theatrically nautical, with port and starboard lights beside the bar. It seemed Chalmers hadn't yet arrived. From where I stood I could see that the bar also served two other rooms. Right across was a lower and less fancy tap, populated by men wearing caps and jerseys. The middle room, to my left, seemed almost empty. In it a thin young man was playing a piano without any show of enthusiasm.

I ordered a beer and took it to the end of the counter. It was then that I had the uncomfortable impression that I was being watched. . . .

I couldn't think by whom. Not by anyone in this room, nor the one opposite. The man at the piano next door was too much occupied, and the only other occupant was a girl sitting near the small fire. She wore jeans turned up to her knees and a soiled white sweater, but her back was towards me—a slender, attractive back, with thick, shining fair hair tied back and reaching to her shoulders.

Then I saw that there was a mirror on the far wall, and in it I could see her eyes, steadily observing me.

As I stood there waiting, one of the jerseyed men from the stone-floored tap over the other side went in and spoke to her. He was a youngish, stockily built fellow. She listened to what he had to say and shook her head.

Chalmers was late. I moved up the counter and asked for another glass of bitter. The barman was short and powerfully built, with that flabby pallor which often indicates a one-time athlete running to seed. I didn't much like the look of him. I gave Chalmers another ten minutes. It was twenty-five past eight by the bar clock when I passed through the door marked RESIDENTS ONLY and went to the desk in a corner of the entrance hall. No one seemed to be in attendance, but when I pressed the bell-push, a big, sandy-haired man appeared from the back quarters. I gave my name and asked if I could have a room.

"Cradford?" he said, eyeing me a moment longer than seemed necessary. "Yes, of course. I think you'll be comfortable in Number Four, Mr. Cradford."

I said I would bring my belongings from the car later. I signed the register and put the key in my pocket.

I went back to the bar, hoping to find Chalmers waiting for me, but he wasn't. Passing the middle room, I almost ran into the girl who had been watching me. Her face was all that one could have hoped for; there was an elfin, urchin loveliness about her. She looked about nineteen or twenty. She turned away from me to the bar, paid for a soft drink, and went back to her seat.

I stood, feeling more uneasy and uncomfortable every minute. Then, just before nine o'clock, the door opened and four people came in. But I saw only one of them.

I could feel a painful thudding in my chest. Why on earth had Chalmers brought Vanessa here with him, after warning me that she was to know nothing about his letter?

It wasn't till then that I realized the man with her wasn't Warren at all. He was a tall, heavy man with a smooth out-thrust chin and a big thin-lipped mouth. With them was a slimmer man with hair curly and almost golden. There was a youngish woman, too, wearing a red skirt and a black halter. She was pale, her vividly drawn mouth a cruel red slash in her sallow face.

Suddenly Vanessa caught sight of me. She stared for a moment, the thin brows arching incredulously over her blue, humorous eyes.

"Of all the least-expected people!" she exclaimed. "Mark. I can't—I just can't believe it." Then she recovered herself. "Mark, this is Joel Reardon." The big man nodded without smiling. "And this is Ross Malin and his wife, Rita." Vanessa drew in a long breath. "I've not seen Mark for years," she explained. "Once I thought he was going to marry me, but he changed his mind."

"Good for him," Reardon said in a voice that rumbled up from his chest. "You're a damned expensive luxury, Van."

"But why are you *here*, Mark, of all obscure places on earth?" Vanessa asked.

"Taking a late holiday," I said. "I might ask why *you're* here?"

"We're almost at home. Warren and I live only a mile away." She turned to the others. "Where is Warren?"

"Warren? I don't know," Reardon said. "I heard him telling Ollett he was going to

Continued on page 41

BEGINNING THE BOOK OF THE YEAR

Best foot forward

by COLIN HODGKINSON

My legs were shattered in a terrible crash. I lay helpless and useless. Then came the war and I made up my mind.... I had to fly again

I CAME out of the coma shouting. My eyes opened to light. Light, white ceiling and a white mound in front of me which hid the end of the bed. Instantaneously with the light came the pain. It was in my right leg, and felt as if it would never go.

Somebody was there by the side of the bed. A grey, bony man whom I recognized: my cousin, Ralf Gibson. He sidled nearer and looked warily into my eyes.

"It's off," he said. "They've taken it off."

"What's off?" I asked.

"The leg. They've taken it off."

The leg. I wasn't shocked, nor even upset. The statement was irrelevant. This was not happening to me, but to someone else who existed before the pain.

"Well," I asked, "what have they done with it? Thrown it out of the window?"

Ralf smiled, nodded his head and then seemed to dance away backwards, swept out of my consciousness by the pain.

This was my luck, to be disabled so soon. It was May, 1939. We all knew that war would not be long delayed. I was a pupil pilot in the Fleet Air Arm—and it was in training, before anything was accomplished, that I was knocked out of the sky to become a cripple.

Pain. Heat. Sweat. Pain. A raging thirst. Nurses bending over me. Friends murmuring

Hodgkinson with his wife June in the garden of their country home. Like Douglas Bader he flew with artificial legs as a wartime fighter pilot

sympathy. River sounds and smells. The desire to die. And always, as constant as the pain, the figure of my mother.

She had arrived with my cousins from the West Country the morning after the accident. The matron at Gravesend Hospital, where they had taken me, met her with the news that the odds on my survival were no better than even.

On the next day, the fourteenth, my mutilated right leg was taken off six inches below the knee. It had been smashed to pulp and splinters: a compound, complex and commuted fracture. They had tried unsuccessfully to set it when I was first brought in.

My left leg was in considerably better state: a fractured ankle and a completely shattered metatarsal; shattered as if a steam roller had rolled it flat. All this I was to learn later. I was delirious for four days after the crash.

The amputation had been technically successful, but it had been made too low. The circulation died. It was my mother who discovered that gas gangrene had set in. "Mollie," as I called her, had been allowed to sit by my bed. At about midnight on the sixteenth, at a moment when I must have been dying, she saw my fever raging and drew the attention of the nurse to the stench rising from the stump.

The surgeon arrived, took one look and smell—the poison, mottling the stump, had encroached to above the knee—and ordered that I be taken to the theatre at once. My state of shock was such that any deep anaesthetic was out of the question. They gave me a whiff of ether, and I was sustained by oxygen.

There was no time for pretty and painstaking surgery. Moss took the leg off as high as he dared, consistent with leaving me a pad of flesh on which I could hope to fit an artificial leg. In the event, the amputation was made four inches above the middle thigh. I was under the ether for forty minutes.

If they couldn't take the pain away, I informed my mother, the surgeon and the nurses, I didn't want to live. To combat the growing septicaemia in my left leg I was dosed with M and B, which had the effect of making me even more morose and sorry for myself.

Apart from the pain, the thing I remember best is the heat. The sweat crawled down what was left of my thigh to seep through the bandages on my stump, prickling like salt into the pain. Sometimes I let go completely, clapping my hands and yelling incoherent obscenities. Finally, on June 20, I was moved. They took me to a hospital at Greenwich. Slowly I came

Colin, aged six, with his father, a keen sportsman and first World War pilot. "He excited my ambition to fly"

back to life. As the injections grew fewer my mind began to clear. I was by nature shy with women. Being minus a leg made the whole thing even more delicate. I would never hunt again, play rugby or cricket, or box.

Towards the middle of July the surgeons began to be concerned about my left leg, whose osteomylitis gave no sign of clearing up. One day, when sister was changing my dressings, she announced that I was due for another operation later in the week.

I took notice at once. "Are they going to take the other leg off as well?"

"No," she said, in a motherly way. "The operation at Gravesend was a guillotine, done in a great hurry because the stump was full of poison. Now that you are stronger the stump must be tidied up so that you will be able to fit an artificial leg. See now?"

What I was frightened of was the possibility of losing the other, natural, one. Sister's explanation sounded plausible, but I was far from convinced that I wouldn't come back from the theatre with two stumps instead of one. I nearly didn't come back at all. For more than forty-eight hours I hovered between life and death. Only Mollie was allowed to see me.

This was my lowest period. The little strength I had regained drained away, and I watched the process calmly.

Mollie sat and read to me for hours. I can imagine only now what she suffered; at the time her ordeal meant nothing to me whatever. I scarcely heard what she read; too content to slip down under layers of darkness, layers which grew progressively deeper and more desirable. I was putting out the candles of my life.

One day Mollie put the book down and leaned over me. She brought her face close to mine and whispered in my ear. I saw her from very far away, but I heard her distinctly and I recall every word she said. She spoke slowly and her voice trembled.

"Don't go, darling," she pleaded. "Try for my sake to live. You're too young to die without a fight. There's so much to live for, even without a leg. Please try, darling. Please."

I looked into her eyes and the tortured expression there rallied my will. I felt something I had not known for some time: a dynamic emotion, which was shame. In a sort of revelation I realized what all this was costing her. For myself I had the right to die; for her I hadn't. Pain returned like a gear engaging; I took her hand and prised myself back into life.

The heat of that famous summer was almost as oppressive as the news. With the climax a month away there was much activity at Greenwich. The government feared massive air attacks and it was announced towards the end of August that our hospital was being moved to safer quarters near Bristol. But before reaching Bristol we were to make a temporary stop at a London County Council hospital in Dartford.

All hands were very matey and cheerful before setting off, but I looked forward to the journey with dread. My fears were justified. Very soon the jolting set my avid nerves alive with pain. When we reached Dartford I had had as much as I could stand.

The following Sunday, September 3, I listened

Before he was ten, Colin had been to four boarding schools. At all, his reports were deplorable. He was big for his age, and excelled at games—which pacified his father

Colin's mother, sensitive and forbearing, inspired him with the will to live when he was near death

Horses and hounds were an important part of life for Colin and his sister. When Colin's negligence caused the death of the terrier Jezebel (above) his father banished him from home during holidays

with disinterest to Neville Chamberlain announcing the declaration of war. His speech was followed by the first air-raid warning. Unable to move, I sweated it out with what patience I could muster. Ten minutes later the "all clear" sounded.

Happily we didn't stay long at Dartford. We now knew our destination, a lunatic asylum at Barrow Gurney, six miles from Bristol, which had been taken over by the navy. Just before the party entrained I got official intimation that I had been invalided out of the Service. I was to receive the princely pension of £3 a week.

I remember little of the train journey but its discomfort. I do recall lying in a rug on Temple Meads Station late in the evening with people peering down and muttering sympathy. One old body, no doubt with first World War memories, bent over me tearfully and tucked a small packet under the blankets. She called me a hero, and wished all like me a quick recovery. When she had gone I pulled the packet out; a bag of peanuts. Somehow it struck me as being highly appropriate. . . .

The hospital at Barrow Gurney was heavily overstaffed in expectation of massive casualty intakes, but for the first three months turnover in the surgical ward was very slack.

My left foot had never promised to heal and towards the end of the year it became a nuisance. The toes were still dead white and webbed, and the sinus remained obstinate. For three months I had fairly frequent operations to cut away the dead and rotting bone. After every operation the leg was encased in plaster. This, they told me, was a new treatment which had proved very successful during the Spanish Civil War. Maybe. Personally, I found it most unpleasant.

The repeated operations, coupled with my increasing boredom and lassitude, led me one day in early January, 1940, to make a serious moral and physical review of the situation.

I was a long way from being fit, but I was no longer very ill. My right stump was as good as it could ever be. If it hadn't been for my obstinate left foot I could look forward to walking; walking with an artificial leg, but walking. Walking where and into what? I had no idea.

The thought of the world outside began to fret me. I became curious about the war, even excited by it. As for flying, I told myself, I had finished with it honourably. Yet, illogically, I was conscious of a sense of failure.

THEN, on a Sunday morning, everything was changed. I was thumbing listlessly through the *Sunday Express* when the headline of a short paragraph caught my eye. A young man named Douglas Bader, I read, who had lost both legs in an air crash nearly ten years before at Woodley Aerodrome, near Reading, had talked himself back into the R.A.F. and was now flying Hurricanes on operational duties.

I dropped the paper and pulled myself up on the pillow, the invalid's equivalent of sitting bolt upright. I collected the paper and read the paragraph again. Bader, it said, not only flew but danced, played golf and swam. He was married. He drove a car.

I didn't mind about the dancing, the swimming and the golf. The essential point was that Bader was in the war. He was doing something significant at this significant time, as were my friends. And it occurred to me at once that the only thing he could do was to fly. He couldn't, if he wished to be in the fighting line, become a naval or an army officer. He must be in an aircraft, where his tin legs were as good as natural ones, and perhaps even better. It was the one place where he could fight the war sitting down.

But flying? I thought I had done with it. I hadn't liked it and it hadn't liked me. How could I come to terms with it now, diminished and disabled, when, fit and whole, I had never been on terms with it at all? And then, suddenly, I knew that it was not a question of coming to terms with flying but with myself. To prove to myself that I could still be a man among men I had to get into the war, and in a fighting rôle.

Put down thus the statement sounds absurdly romantic, like the hero's decision in some book for boys. But it made desperate sense for me. The sequel followed implacably. The only flying rôle possible for me, as for Bader, was as a pilot in an operational squadron. Getting a ground job or even instructing in the air would not be enough. I had to fly against the enemy.

Looking back now I see that, in a sense, all my life had led up to that moment of decision. . . .

My early boyhood comes into focus as a landscape with figure. The landscape is the Mendip Hills with, in the foreground, the tall, three-gabled house, called Glencot, in which I was born. Before this stands the figure—my father, in hunting pink, booted and spurred.

The graces of life for my father meant indulgence in costly and usually dangerous sports. To shoot big game accurately and run wild boar in India, to play cricket for Somerset and blow a hunting horn better than any man in England, to be one of the best amateur huntsmen and, later, one of the outstanding masters of foxhounds of his time—all this meant a great deal in his world, as it did to me.

With these hearty talents went others quite disparate. "G," as everyone called him, played the piano beautifully, if seldom. His big hands had green fingers: it seemed to me that Father had but to look at a plant to make it grow. He had exceptional power over all animals, and they adored him. With women he was always, and with children he could be, an infallible charmer.

Father, with an M.C. and Bar as a pilot in the first World War, excited my ambition to fly. He talked of aircraft as he did of horses, and fifteen years afterwards, when I first handled a Spitfire, the force of the comparison came back to me vividly.

Our life was lived with horses, and my father put me on a pony when I was four years old. In 1929, when I was nine, he took me out with the Mendip Hunt, of which he had just become the master. Father soon made it clear that I was to be no mere spectator, arriving after the death with the car-borne followers. As his son I had to "go" and "go" well, or he would know the reason why. Being quite without nerves I asked nothing better.

My mother was intensely feminine, sensitive and forbearing. She never rode and, although a good driver, hated being driven fast. I can only imagine what she suffered as Father whirled us round in one of his powerful cars.

Never strong and perhaps undermined by the physical ordeal of bringing me into the world—I was a ten-month child and weighed thirteen

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How dare Miss Meakin sit in judgment on love? She knew nothing about it—she was all head and no heart

Permission to marry

by **BRETON AMIS**

ILLUSTRATED BY BATCHELOR

RUMBOLD was in a hurry to get to court. His car was laid up, so he ran for the bus. The stop had recently been moved farther along the road and the bus swept past before he reached it. Cursing, he remembered a recent meeting of the transport committee at which Councillor Miss Meakin had suggested moving this stop nearer to the maternity home. He had opposed, citing the effect of gear changes on new-born babes, but Miss Meakin had won the day.

An accommodating motorist himself, he thumbed for a lift, and was nearly run over. The headline, "Well-known Author Slain by Maniac Driver," changed to "Author Slain by Well-known Maniac Driver" as he recognized the car as Eileen Meakin's. He shook a fist at it, then pretended to be lighting his pipe.

Enemies though they were, clashing on every committee, the Meakin woman might have had the common decency to give him a lift. He, she and old George Ashburton were on the magistrates' rota for that morning's court, and as senior he would preside—unless he wasn't there.

He walked fast. Shop windows showed him the pleasing reflection of a man in his prime, grey-haired, eagle-eyed, and rather handsome.

He was ten minutes late, and he had lost the Chair. He couldn't very well ask a woman to move, and Eileen Meakin's sweet smile told him she didn't intend to.

"Good morning," she murmured. "Still short of petrol?"

Rumbold was short of breath as well, but his silence was eloquent. Miss Meakin and George Ashburton were in the middle of a case, so he sat back and looked magisterial while he wished he had this slim, dark woman in the dock on a charge of manslaughter, later reduced to driving with felonious intent.

She had fought him ever since he started taking an interest in local affairs. Their warfare was guerrilla and merciless. As an author he had campaigned for two new libraries; she had beaten him with her confounded reading-rooms, stocked with trashy newspapers and magazines. But he had knobbled her idea of floodlighting the statue of the first woman mayor and, thanks to him, her scheme to preserve the traditional lovers' lane had resulted in a much-needed car park. Currently, they were in headlong collision over the site of a children's playground. . . .

"You agree?" she was whispering to him.

"Eh? What?" Caught napping, blast her.

"Cycling without lights. Ten shillings?"

"Make it a pound," he growled. "Everything's gone up."

"Pay ten shillings," Miss Meakin announced crisply, and, in an aside: "Mr. Ashburton agrees."

A petty victory. Ashburton was a whiskery old walrus with the eyes of a stranded seal.

The bald dome of Fenner, the clerk, rose

above the Bench. He went into a huddle with Miss Meakin; Rumbold's foot tapped loudly.

"Old Bates," Miss Meakin whispered. "Drunk and disorderly again. It really is a disgrace—he's had fifty convictions."

"We aren't supposed to consider his record until we find him guilty," Rumbold said smugly.

"I know that, but he's seventy, lives alone, has a weak heart and should be put into some nice, comfortable home for his own sake. The clerk thinks it could be arranged."

Rumbold said stiffly: "I'm not being a party to restricting a man's liberty just because he gets merry on a Saturday night, Miss Meakin."

"He doesn't get merry. He goes to sleep in the middle of the road and wants to fight the police when they wake him up. Some day he'll be run over, unless. . . ."

Rumbold spoke across her. "I say, George, I've got that first edition for you. Dirt cheap, too. You agree we fine old Bates the usual pound?"

"If you can afford it," said Ashburton, "You always pay his fine. Thanks a lot, Hugh."

"Majority verdict," murmured Rumbold, and Eileen Meakin's silver-grey eyes sparked.

"It *is* customary to try the case," she snapped.

Old Bates had no objection. He liked the Bench, and the big, fatherly policemen who looked after him. The constable's evidence must be right, he said, and if it wasn't he wouldn't know, because he'd had one too many.

"And once too often," Miss Meakin scolded. "If you come before us again. . . ."

She was a typical schoolmistress, Rumbold thought. She couldn't resist a lecture, though she knew nothing about old soldiers with a weakness for strong cider laced with gin.

NEXT came a case of common assault, one neighbour admitting throwing a bowl of soapy water over another, but cross-summoning for a prod in the ribs with a clothes prop. They slanged one another until Rumbold lost patience and muttered to the Chair to cut it short by binding both over to keep the peace.

"It's better for them to let off steam here than over the garden fence," Miss Meakin observed. "Besides, it's a difficult case—one of them had a chimney on fire."

Rumbold didn't see what that had to do with it. He said so, and received a pitying glance. "The other had a line out," Miss Meakin murmured. "Black smuts on the wash. Provocation."

She continued to hear the case at length, and in the end she dismissed both summonses without even consulting him. "A short list today," she said brightly.

But then Fenner popped up again. "One application," he told them. "A girl of nineteen seeks permission to marry. The father objects."

"And the mother?" asked Miss Meakin.

"She's in favour, but if one parent opposes consent has to be obtained."

Rumbold approved of that. His experience as a bachelor told him that fathers were generally prepared to part with their daughters unless there was some serious obstacle. It was the mothers who wanted to hang on in the hope that the market improved. There wasn't a doubt that Eileen Meakin, champion of lovers' lanes, would side with mother and daughter, but he was prepared to be as impartial as ever, apart from a bias towards paternal authority. Men knew what they were doing. If the father objected the case was as good as over.

The girl was small and dark, with frightened blue eyes. She had her young man with her—a sturdy chap, rather pale, ready to be defiant. They stood close together, holding hands, and Rumbold couldn't help thinking what a touching picture they made.

This was no time for sentiment, though. The father was saying they hadn't any money saved

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They held hands as they stood listening to Miss Meakin. "There seems to be no reason," she was saying, "why you young people shouldn't wait"

As a stunt in his television show *Take Your Pick*, Miles took a contestant, Arthur Norfolk (centre), to dinner with Sabrina

Michael Miles, TV's shy showman

by KEITH ELLIS

He hides his complex in the "pure corn" of a quiz show. And by giving valuables away, he collects a fortune for himself

THE diamond rush was over. It was the climax to Britain's biggest television stunt. Five thousand men, women and children had scrabbled in the mud of a Cheltenham field for a buried cylinder containing £1,000 worth of diamonds.

For the previous six weeks, Michael Miles, who had organized it in connection with his ITV show *Take Your Pick*, had worked sixteen hours a day on the details. He had hired police, sited car-parks and set up lavatories. He had laid on catering, briefed St. John Ambulance men and run ten special trains from London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. He had even remembered to take out a licence for his starting-pistol.

Then came the letter. One of the prospectors had arrived at the field at eight fifteen in the morning. He had seen a car drive up and two men push something into the ground. "I spaced the positions as near as I could," he wrote, "and was very tempted to stake my claim there and then. However, my conscience prevailed."

The man need not have worried. Miles had prepared not one cylinder but fifty. One contained the diamonds, the other forty-nine held premium bonds. The conscience-stricken prospector had seen only the first one hammered in.

"Michael had noticed some houses about four hundred yards away," explains one of his assistants, Alec Dane. "He thought someone might spy on us with a telescope."

A six-foot-two New Zealander with jug ears, close-together eyes and a nose that goes a long way to meeting his broad, bulging chin, Miles has a shrewdness that belies his open, easy manner.

His flair for the glamorous stunt has kept his show continually among ITV's top ten and the radio version has been Luxembourg's top give-away programme for the last five years. Every week, two thousand people write in for the two hundred places in the studio audience from which the television contestants are picked. The Post Office dealt with 300,000 entries for the first round of the diamond rush.

One critic wrote: "The whole show is shrewdly designed to combine suspense, humour, and the unpredictable quirks of humanity. It will succeed in the present temperature of public taste precisely for those reasons."

Nothing is too obvious for *Take Your Pick*. Miles has taken a contestant to dinner with Sabrina and sent another to Italy, with all expenses paid, to get a photograph of Gina Lollobrigida. In the forfeits, which have to be performed by contestants who fall down on the questions, he has men dress up in women's clothes or do slapstick imitations of Covent Garden porters by balancing a pile of hat boxes on their heads.

His everlasting heartiness (a critic once said it "bordered on St. Vitus's Dance"; he himself attributes it to "my outsize inferiority complex") draws shrieks out of his audience. "We don't appeal to the intelligence," he says. "*Take Your Pick* is corn, pure corn." Currently the show is offering a fully furnished house as a prize.

The formula, freshened with minor variations, has a perennial appeal. For the last ten years, it has been practically the sole source of his five-figure income. The "Yes-No Interlude," in which contestants have to talk with him for sixty seconds without using the words yes and no, was first used in a troop show which he ran in South Africa in 1943.

Miles appreciates to the full the value of his golden goose. "He's got a good proposition and he's making the most of it," says B.B.C. producer Jacques Brown. John Beard, an advertising executive in charge of the sponsored radio version of *Take Your Pick*, recalls: "Miles wanted a lot of money and insisted on it."

With commercial television he was even shrewder. When the I.T.A. came into being he had a film made of a television version of his show and persuaded Associated-Rediffusion to take it. But he did not sell just the idea. He got the subsidiary of an advertising agency to produce the show for him and then he sold the completed film, as a package, to A-R.

Some time ago he realized that he could extend the public appeal of his show by allowing viewers to compete for prizes. The Television Act states specifically that "nothing shall

"I live a simple life," says Miles. With his wife and children, Sarah and Andrew, he has a flat near London and a house in the country

Mrs. Miles controls the gong as her husband quizzes a contestant. Behind is a picture of a house which is being offered as a prize

be included in any programme which offers any prize of significant value which is available only to persons receiving that programme."

Everyone had taken this to mean that programme contractors could not attract audiences by offering them prizes. "But I found a different interpretation," says Miles. "The Act says *only* to persons receiving that programme. I decided that if we also advertised in newspapers, the clause wouldn't apply." The lawyers agreed. The result was the diamond rush and the fully furnished house.

Take Your Pick absorbs the whole of Miles's working life. On Mondays, he sees and cuts the rushes of the previous week's television film. On Tuesdays, he plans the programme for the recording on the following Thursday. Wednesday is devoted to the radio show and on Friday he retires to the country to write the next week's radio and television shows.

Even in his rare moments of leisure, he is unable to forget his show. Recently, he was talking to the landlord of a country inn who mentioned that he had once sold corn in Egypt. After Miles had suitably expressed his surprise, the man revealed that Egypt was the name of a nearby village.

Miles made a note in the ideas-book he always keeps in his pocket.

SHORTLY afterwards, he sent out a competitor, with all expenses paid, to look for a tiger's tooth. In successive recording sessions, the man rang in to say that he was searching in Ostend, Gibraltar and California. Miles pretended to be worried about the cost. Only at the end of the stunt did he reveal that Ostend, Gibraltar and California were villages within fifty miles of London.

Miles admits his bondage. "I hate my work and I love it," he says. "When I come back from holiday, I loathe going back to the office. But somehow, I couldn't do without it. Basically, I'm a very shy person; that is what drives me on."

Associates agree that his strong points are drive and organization. "He sees every detail," says Eryl Davies, one of his assistants. During rehearsals he strides up and down the stage, criticizing the tone of the organ, questioning a camera angle, snapping at an assistant who is on stage at the wrong time.

Audrey Starrett, who directs the show, admits that he can be difficult to get on with. "He's particularly nervous just before we start to record," she says.

Technical faults particularly annoy him. When the show was telerecorded at Highbury, a camera broke down and three thousand feet of film spilled on to the floor. Miles was furious. "He rushed down and tried to fix the camera himself," says Beard. "Of course, he couldn't. But we almost had to pull him out."

Miles admits: "I was very bad indeed at first. But it wasn't because I was cocky. It was because I was very unsure of myself."

The son of a New Zealand barrister, Michael John Miles got his first job as a radio announcer in Wellington when he was nineteen at £2 10s. a week. Unfit for military service, he went to Australia shortly after war broke out "to advance my career." While working for a station in Melbourne he read that the Malayan Government was opening a propaganda station in Singapore. He spent £5 on a recording of his voice and airmailed it with an application for a job. A few weeks later he received a cable offering him a three-year contract at £20 a week.

One of the secretaries at the station was a pretty English brunette called Joan Shirvell. After a lightning courtship, Miles married her. When the Japs invaded, their house was bombed. As Singapore was about to fall, Miles was among half the staff ordered to Java to set up an auxiliary station there. He sold his car on the docks for a box of matches. Within three weeks the auxiliary station had also closed and Miles and his wife went to Australia.

Miles "wanted to be nearer the fighting in the Middle East." He sailed for South Africa and took an announcing job in Johannesburg. He broadcast a weekly quiz programme of his own devising from British military hospitals just outside the city. It was the forerunner of *Take Your Pick*. After a dispute over sick leave, he resigned from his job—but not before he had sold his quiz show to a commercial station in Portuguese East Africa and negotiated a personal appearance tour with a South African theatre circuit.

In 1945, he sailed to America to study American radio. Although he did some work for the B.B.C., he needed more money and built up a small exporting business in plastic handbags and coat-hangers. Later, after an Ensa tour in Europe, the B.B.C. bought his quiz show, *Radio Forfeits*.

Miles presented *Radio Forfeits* on the halls for three years. Then came *Take Your Pick* and, later, ITV.

ALTHOUGH he refuses to say how much he makes, he admits that *Take Your Pick* keeps him "comfortable." "I live a simple life," he says. He has two cars, a flat in Twickenham and a house in the country. As an occasional break, he takes a cruise with Joan and their two children, Sarah, aged six, and Andrew, aged three.

Over the years, he has developed an increasingly cynical attitude towards the people who are dissatisfied with the prizes they win. Recently, a man who had just won an expensive barbecue jumped down from the stage at the end of the show and shouted to the other competitors: "This thing's no good to me. Anyone want to buy it?"

Miles still thought it was a useful prize. At nine thirty next morning, he asked Eryl Davies to tell the manufacturers that it had been won and to order another for the next show. The manufacturers were dry. "We know all about that," they said. "When we opened this morning we found your man sitting on the doorstep with his barbecue. He wanted to sell it back to us."

To make sure that the same thing doesn't happen with his dream house, Miles has inserted a clause in the entry form which prevents the winner from selling the house for at least eighteen months.

"I've got to the stage now," he says, "where I tell competitors straight—they can either take the prizes or leave them." THE END

Ranger of the suburban wilds

by DON EVERITT

Harold Lambert is fighting to keep Wimbledon Common old-fashioned and primitive. It means more fun for all his visitors—except the hooligans

Ralph Thrale, one of the mounted keepers who roam the common, stops to meet visitors. His riding habit was designed by the ranger

Keeper Munro inspects a young fisherman's catch at Queensmere. He works six days a week from 9.30 in the morning until sunset

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARTHUR WHITTINGTON

THE gang of boys looked ready to cause trouble. They came from the new London estates which house four thousand families alongside Wimbledon and Putney commons. A keeper had stopped them playing cricket on the grass. "It's against the by-laws," he said. When the boys began to argue bitterly with him he told them to see the ranger, who controls the commons.

"Hooligans cause more trouble in parks and commons than all the natural pests put together," says Harold Marshall Lambert, the ranger. "The old-established Wimbledon and Putney residents had warned me that the new estates would bring a rough and troublesome element on to the commons. But I hold the view that if you start by treating people as gentlemen and sportsmen they will behave as such."

Lambert met the boys and explained to them that their hard cricket ball endangered passers-by. "If you like to form yourselves into a club, I'll find you a stretch of suitable turf where you can play organized games."

Two days later, the boys called on Lambert again to say that they had started a club under the leadership of a local ex-Serviceman. The ranger allocated them a piece of ground, and, at their invitation, named them the Queensmere Boys' Club, after one of the pools on the commons, and became their president.

"Today, the local youngsters give us no trouble," says Lambert. "We still get vandalism but all the culprits we catch come from the densely populated areas of London. It seems that as soon as they see any wild life they want to kill it."

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, one of Lambert's four mounted keepers, Roy Barrett, rode through a glade on Wimbledon Common and heard pistols being fired. The shots flew through the foliage near his head. He dismounted, crept forward and saw two youths with air pistols. On nearby Queensmere a mallard lay dead. With the help of another keeper, Barrett arrested the youths and turned them over to the police. "They came from the East End," says Lambert.

A retired lieutenant-colonel with a tall, stooping figure and an enlightened and humorous outlook, Lambert keeps law and order "in the right proportions" over nearly two thousand acres of natural countryside set in South London. Barely six miles from Piccadilly, Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath form, with the adjacent Richmond Park, perhaps the most important lung for Greater London's eight million inhabitants.

Lambert, who bridles if anyone calls the commons a park, carefully cultivates their wild and old-world atmosphere. He fiercely rejected the recent suggestions that the commons should have a paddling pool and flower beds. He dislikes motor transport, and several years ago replaced the vehicles used by the maintenance department with horses and gaily coloured carts. His four mounted keepers ride along their beats

Ranger Lambert and Deputy Head Keeper James Spilman with Allenby. Lambert replaced maintenance vehicles with horses

A maintenance man and a keeper at Queensmere. The ranger refused to ban early-morning nude bathing in the pond

wearing Victorian riding habit which Lambert designed: black bowlers, bright yellow waistcoats and khaki jackets and breeches.

"I try to create here the leisurely atmosphere of a hundred years ago," he says. "A place where Londoners can quickly get away from the hustle and the smog."

Lambert works hard to protect the commons' traditions and historical landmarks. In the 150-year-old windmill near the ranger's office, Baden Powell once stayed and wrote part of *Scouting For Boys*. When decay threatened the mill recently, Lambert—"we're always short of money"—made successful public appeals for £750 for repairs.

Not long ago, he came to the defence of a group of bathers who, by commons tradition, swim in the nude every day in Queensmere, the largest of the three pools. Residents in the area were reported to be perturbed by the practice. Lambert was asked to stop it.

Instead, he inspected the bathers himself. He found that they arrive at the pool between 6.30 a.m. and 7 a.m., that women rarely take part and that all bathers left the water long before 9 a.m. The by-laws forbid bathing after that hour.

"Some of the men have swum daily in the pond for fifty years," reported Lambert. "They are a grand crowd and I see no reason to stop this century-old custom."

Gang wars between Teddy Boys did force Lambert to end the traditional Guy Fawkes bonfire on the commons. "We used to have upwards of five hundred spectators at the fire," says the ranger. "Then a couple of years ago the Teddy Boys, who had caused trouble before, really staged a terrible battle.

"They fired rockets at one another and into the crowd. They fought with broken glasses. They tossed army thunderflashes into the fire and squibs into a nearby public house. They tore up signposts and smashed seats. We could do nothing to stop them. It would have needed a score of policemen with truncheons. Luckily, only one of the spectators got hurt. Since then, I've banned the bonfire."

Fires at other times of the year started by drought, by children or by careless adults cause the commons ranger varying degrees of concern.

Last summer, a man and a woman went to the common to sketch. In a clearing surrounded by gorse bushes they fell asleep. Suddenly, they woke to find themselves in the middle of an inferno. The man pushed the woman through the flames, then followed her. He died later from extensive burns. Lambert says: "The fire had started some distance from where they lay. It was all over before we could get to them."

Lambert became the ranger in 1945. He had left the army after serving through the war and had spent a year in commerce in London. "I didn't like it a bit," he says. "I'm an outdoor man and I love riding. This job was a godsend."

When he took up his new post, he found his staff working under harsh Victorian discipline. "On duty the keepers were not allowed to talk to one another or to the general public. Early every morning they had to parade for inspection in front of the ranger's office. Terrific antipathy existed between the keepers and the labourers."

"I promptly banished the no-talking rule and inspection, called the labourers maintenance men and gave them the same wages as the keepers. Now they're the happiest bunch of chaps."

THREE years ago, Lambert provided four of the keepers with horses, to give greater and speedier coverage of the commons. "As on all open spaces, we have a lot of trouble with social misfits. We get to know them and, on horseback, we can spot them more easily and usher them off the commons before they get into trouble."

The commons became public property and London's playground in 1871 when the owner at that time, Earl Spencer, agreed to relinquish his rights to the land in return for a perpetual annuity of £1,200. By last year, the amount paid to the Spencer family was more than £100,000.

Eight conservators, five appointed by the commons' ratepayers and one each by the Home Office, the Ministry of Works and the War Office, govern the commons. By Act of Parliament they levy rates on all those householders living within three-quarters of a mile of any of the paths or roads on the commons. The rates provide the money to pay the Spencer family and to maintain the commons.

Lambert employs nine keepers and ten maintenance men, most of whom live in houses on the commons. "All are poorly paid," he says. Salaries total approximately £7,300 a year for the nineteen men and two clerks.

"The keepers patrol eight beats, each covering from two to three hundred acres. They work six days a week from nine-thirty to sunset. They're long hours in the summer."

The keepers stringently protect the abundant animal and plant life on the commons. "We don't allow people to take heather, holly, pussy willow or any other cuttings. If we did, we'd soon have the barrow boys here in force." Most mornings three keepers go out with guns to shoot grey squirrel. The Surrey Squirrel Club assists them at weekends. "Grey squirrels do untold harm to trees and kill off the bird life by eating eggs."

In protecting the birds on the commons the keepers have confiscated countless catapults and bows and arrows. Lambert says: "In two successive years, eggs disappeared from the nests of swans alongside Queensmere. The next year, we moved the old nest to a less accessible spot, but the two swans did not take the hint. They built a new nest on the old site. We then built a fence round the nest and when the eggs came I posted a man on guard every day. We were rewarded with four cygnets which we later handed to the Keeper of the Swans on the Thames."

Aside from their usual bathing facilities, the commons have cricket and soccer pitches, two nine-hole golf courses and twenty miles of horse rides and exercise grounds. Lambert has to ensure that the golfers observe the by-laws designed to protect the general public, in particular the one stating: "Every person playing golf shall wear a red coat."

There is one nuisance which Lambert and his men have spent hours plotting to stop. Almost every night, some fishmonger, greengrocer, fruiterer or junk man tips a lorry-load of rubbish on the commons. Lambert has posted watchmen time after time to try to catch the culprits. "These traps always end with my men having to clear the rubbish in the morning. We can't possibly keep watch around the entire perimeter of the commons. Lately, we've had a glut of mattresses and perambulators and other domestic rubbish dumped on us at night. What a good job we don't all use the countryside as a rubbish dump!"

THE END

The young and active enjoy the appetising taste of Guinness

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G.E.2871

Flare-up over street lights

by JOHN SANDILANDS

The experts can't agree on how to light Britain after dark. One choice they made turned pretty girls green

Old and new in St. John's Wood, London. Thousands of residents protested about the new standards

Nottingham's tungsten lamps: good lighting can cut down accidents and crime

ARTHUR LEE, a colliery shot-firer, grew chrysanthemums in his spare time. He was so successful that he had ambitions of becoming a champion grower. Then the gas lights outside his home in Cudworth, Yorkshire, were changed for modern fluorescent "daylighting."

His blooms began to deteriorate. They formed hardly any buds. Many did not flower at all and others flowered too late for show purposes.

The trouble was traced to the new lighting. Many chrysanthemums need at least seven hours of darkness in every twenty-four for correct growth. The gas lights had always gone out at midnight, but the fluorescent lights stayed on all night. It meant that Arthur Lee's garden was in perpetual "daylight."

Lee's problem—solved when the local council agreed to shade the lamp nearest his house—was only one of many that arise from the lighting of Britain's roads and streets.

"Before the war," says Eric Evans, secretary of the Association of Public Lighting Engineers, "nobody paid much attention to street lights. The end of the blackout brought them to the public's notice, and they have been a source of controversy ever since."

Local authorities can now choose from five main types of lighting—mercury vapour, producing a blue-grey light; sodium, giving a yellow glow; fluorescent "daylighting"; tungsten, similar in colour to domestic electric lighting; and gas, which is still the source of thirty per cent of the country's public illumination.

In spite of the variety—in one seven-mile stretch of London's streets there are thirteen changes of lighting—each type has its detractors.

In 1952 Nottingham, a city noted for its pretty girls, decided to ban sodium lighting within one and a half miles of the city centre because its yellow glow turned the girls' complexions green. The sodium filament lamps were replaced with tungsten lighting, which does not last as long and is not so economical.

In spite of that, the city's Street Lighting Committee decided the extra expense was worth while.

Better lighting has been advocated as a vital factor in road safety. The re-lighting of a stretch of the A40 trunk road was estimated to have cut road accidents there by fifty per cent. But some observers believe that increased illumination, particularly in a side road, encourages more traffic, higher speeds and a consequent increase in accident risk.

Crime prevention is generally regarded as an important by-product of improved street lighting, but one police force complained that modern lights installed in its area made officers visible at three hundred yards and gave the criminal a new advantage.

New lighting installations have often produced the greatest opposition. One city lighting engineer described contemporary lamp standards as "like sick serpents with carpet cleaners in their mouths." Objections to new styles on aesthetic grounds have taken a variety of forms.

When workmen arrived to replace the hand-wrought Victorian standard outside the Stoke-on-Trent home of Arnold Machin, a sculptor, with a new concrete design, Machin had himself chained to it by his wife.

In Greenwich, the architect owner of a seventeenth-century house found that a modern standard was to be put up outside his home, so he promptly filled in the hole that had been dug for it. Workmen came back and put up the standard while the architect was at his office, but on his return he tied a rope to the new post and pulled it down.

"The difficulties of providing an efficient modern lighting installation that blends perfectly with historic surroundings are immense," says Eric Evans.

In St. John's Wood, London, the replacement of iron lamp standards, some of them reputed to have been wrought from cannon that survived Waterloo, led to the formation last year of a militant Preservation Society. Led by John Platts-Mills, the lawyer, with Sir Beverley Baxter as president and including prominent authors, surgeons, painters, architects and business men living in the area, the society recently raised a petition of more than three thousand signatures to complain that the newly installed concrete posts ruined the district's Georgian architecture and lowered property values.

The ideal of having lamp standards designed especially for each locality is hampered by the demands of mass production. An attempt has been made to solve the problem through the Council of Industrial Design—which has an approved lists of over three hundred patterns.

The responsibility for public lighting in this country—apart from the 8,189 miles of trunk roads maintained by the Ministry of Transport—is delegated to more than three thousand local authorities.

This situation occasionally leads to a startling variation in the quality of lighting. Until its illuminations were taken over by the South Western Electricity Board last year the village of Doccombe, in Devon, was lit by two hurricane lamps. The local council provided 12½ gallons of paraffin a year and the official lamplighter, paid a penny a night, bought the matches.

Although experts condemn the absence of a uniform standard of lighting, particularly on adjacent sections of main roads, a strong body of opinion opposes the stereotyping of street lights.

"Every locality has a right to decide its style of lighting, even if the rest of the country thinks it is ugly," says one observer.

In spite of the dissension, British public lighting is recognized as among the best in the world and superior even to that in America. Some twenty per cent of the lighting fittings produced in Britain are sold in the export market.

Another unexpected result of the improvement of lighting installations has been a demand for antique lamp standards as collectors' pieces.

Recently an American air force officer stationed at Burtonwood bought a twelve-foot Victorian gas lamp from a local lighting authority for £1, and shipped it three thousand miles to his home in Michigan as an ornament for his garden. THE END

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How I wooed a Tristan beauty

by D. M. BOOY

She was dark and shy, and I fell in love. In the firelight we courted, while her family gossiped and my rival looked on

WHEN, during February, David Hagan went away again with the other men to collect guano on Nightingale Island, the third and most distant of the Tristan group, I did not go; and in his absence I came to know fairly well the rest of his household. The family lived in an old house, which was one of the biggest and most solidly built in the village. The interior was divided into two parts, one occupied by David, his wife and four children, the other by his widowed mother, old Susan Hagan.

Emily, the eldest of the family, still spinning on the first few evenings when I saw her, would blush and even smile. But she would not talk. It is true that conversation was virtually impossible as long as the spinning continued. The whirling of the big wheel set up such a rumbling vibration in the wooden-floored room that I could do little more than nod and smile my appreciation of hospitable words or gestures. But I arrived one evening to find the spinning-wheel silent and leaning against the wall. Emily took a deep breath—deep enough to bring out in one long, prepared recitation: "Would you-all be so kind as to give me some cord to make a new rim for my spinning-wheel?"

"How much will you need?" I asked.

"About two fathoms."

From that moment, barriers melted like ice-floes, the future rippled ahead in a straight, blue channel, and the knitting needles joggled with merriment.

"Now you'll have to knit 'im a pair of Tristan sawks," the old granny prodded. But Emily only smiled and lowered her head demurely over those she was already knitting. . . .

I arrived on Tristan da Cunha, a remote island in the South Atlantic, with a small naval garrison in 1942. And I soon discovered that the people lived in a world and time of their own, preserving the customs of the early settlers.

Ask an islander what he does all day and he replies, "spadin'"—that is, digging his potato patch.

"And what do you do when you're not spading?"

"Oh, puttin' in—potatoes, of course."

"But you don't do that all the year round?"

"No, some time we go fishin'."

Apart from that and an occasional trip to one of the neighbouring uninhabited islands to collect penguins' eggs or guano, or an excursion up the mountain or round to another beach for driftwood, there is "nawthin." Life is stripped to its bare bones, like the bleached ribs of dead donkeys that we so often found in the gulches.

Sam Swain, the oldest inhabitant, could recall the days when the island population, numbering less than a hundred, did a brisk barter in poultry, potatoes and other provisions with passing ships. An export trade in cattle had been carried on with St. Helena and even with the Cape. But now Tristan had become a land of want. Only a few cattle were kept now as milking cows and, as old Bob Glass had complained, housewives no longer made butter and cheese.

Poultry was scarce and the villagers were content with penguins' eggs or the even less savoury petrels' eggs to vary their monotonous diet of potatoes and fish.

Only one or two of the "old hands," such as Sam Swain and Harry Green, still made the effort to raise a handful of green vegetables in their cottage gardens. The only fruit was the apples which had been planted long ago at Sandy Point on the eastern side of the island. From these the islanders made a sour cider which they called Old Tom. This was less potent than the black tea they brewed; and even the tea-plant no longer flourished.

Fortunately, fish were still plentiful and, now that mild weather had set in and the seas were calm, the men and boys spent many hours in their dinghies, tied up to a kelp-reef about half a mile off shore.

For the purposes of fishing, the islanders had

Island women band together to card wool. If a girl agrees to do a young man's washing it is regarded as a sign of their engagement

Johnny Repetto and his family. In dress and speech the islanders retain their links with the sea. Men are always referred to as "hands," and string is measured in fathoms

Islanders rely on donkeys for transport. Women ride side-saddle, often carrying their babies

Frank Glass, a descendant of the founder, makes moccasins. They are worn by men and women

developed some skill in boat-building, making good use of their resources of driftwood and canvas acquired at rare intervals from ships. With the exception of the ribs, which were made of appletree wood from the plantation at Sandy Point, the entire frames of the boats were made of driftwood. The boats were of two sizes. The larger ones, of which the biggest was about twenty-six feet, could be rigged for sailing and were used for the longer trips to the other islands of the group or to the farther points of Tristan itself. The smaller ones, the dinghies, were used for fishing and for collecting driftwood from the beaches around Big Point.

In the life of Tristan, boats were of great importance. While still young, the boys were encouraged to go out alone in the dinghies, fishing off the shore; and as soon as a youth acquired strength and skill enough he took his place in a boat's crew. Generally he bought, for potatoes, a share in the boat, so that he could take part in the trips for eggs and guano. He had then fulfilled his ambition to begin work. For the same reason every young man of ambition had a dog and a donkey, and hoped to have a yoke of oxen.

The dogs were never treated as pets, though they had names. The donkeys rarely had names beyond being classified as somebody-or-other's Jack or Jenny, and they were all so much the same mixture of shaggy brown, black and grey that we wondered how their owners distinguished them. Cats were not plentiful—certainly not as plentiful as rats.

Most of the children's games were imitations of the work of their elders. The little girls played at housekeeping, though without dolls; at an early age they learned to knit, to card and spin wool. The only toys I ever saw the boys playing with were miniature hand-made models of the local ox-carts. Yet the boys had a happy time: they had cliffs to climb, surf to splash in, dinghies to row and donkeys on which to gallop out to our wireless-hut on Herald Point or down to the beach when the men were bringing boat-loads of driftwood from other sides of the island.

Carts were valued possessions, owned only by a few. Even if a man had the bullocks, he might have to wait years for suitable driftwood to make wheels, axle, shaft and even a small body. The carts were often referred to as "trains." Once Andrew Swain, or Doe as he was called, the fiddler who played at island dances, was shown a picture of a railway train. He looked bewildered at first, then laughed knowingly. "'At ain't a train. It ain't got no bullocks."

Arable land on Tristan is divided into patches and owned by families. If a family neglects its land it might be left to starve. Wood from wrecks is coveted for building (below). Couples often delay marriage until they find enough wood for a house

The men—and the older boys—appeared always to have work to do. During the day the men were rarely seen near the cottages: they were "spadin'" or "puttin' in" or "cleaning grass" from their patches, or they were fishing or boat repairing—or they were collecting for wood. They might even be manufacturing line with the spinning-jenny that had been salvaged from the wrecked brigantine Italia and the use of which they had been taught by the late Andrea Repetto.

Even when rain kept them inside the men had a task awaiting them: with a jack-knife, a leather palm and needle, a roll of twine and some hide, the head of the house would make moccasins for his family—and the earnest suitor would do the same for his girl friend.

Such was the working week for the islander. On Sunday he did no work. Yet it was in some ways the busiest day of all: the day of social intercourse. Its difference from the rest of the week was marked by abstention from all manual occupation, by the wearing of a different suit or dress (a "best" one—not always a newer one) and by the substitution for the usual daily routine of a weekly one equally unvaried in pattern: in the "mawnin'"—"charch" and "wisitin'"; in the "hawf'noon"—"wisitin'," and "co't'n'"; in the "hevenin'"—"charch," "wisitin'," and "co't'n'." Courting was

Home-made sailing boats take Tristan people to neighbouring islands to collect guano or food

the solemn activity of the day: church-going was the entertainment.

The greatest delight of church-going came after the service, when the released congregation assembled outside. Then the tongues began to wag, the women preened themselves in their best dresses, the young men strutted gawkily in their Sunday suits. This was the weekly festival of flaunting one's children and flouting one's neighbour. The scene was a patch of footworn grass where the roads and paths converged and the cottages edged away to leave an open space in front of the church. Here the girls clustered in groups, laughing and chattering, displaying their backs; while the young men stood in a row against the wall of the churchyard—almost sitting on it, but not quite, because of their best trousers—and watched the backs of the girls.

As the congregation slowly dispersed, groups of relatives, who had seen one another every day of the previous week, invited one another home for tea and gossip. "Wisitin'" was actively practised for the rest of the morning, as if people who worked side by side all the week had their only real opportunity of meeting on Sundays. We followed the custom of Sunday morning visiting among the families we knew.

The appearance of any of our expedition was welcomed. Often, as we moved from one cottage to another in leisurely progress, we found that the same group of spectators had hurried ahead of us to witness our next appearance. The same repeated appearances were noticeable of the cups in which tea was offered to us.

Few of the housewives possessed sufficient crockery to provide for more than two or three visitors; and the children were kept busy on Sunday mornings running from cottage to cottage borrowing crocks—so that a guest often found himself drinking from the same chipped mug as in the previous house he had visited.

A strange feature of these visits was the tacit understanding—almost a kind of telepathy—by which, even at a moment when the conversation seemed to be at its liveliest, all the visitors would suddenly, without any previous indication by word or gesture, rise and leave. There was no exchange of goodbyes. In an instant, by some common impulse, everybody stood up and quietly walked out.

On Sunday afternoons the centre of activity moved farther afield. The cliff-top above the beaches—the "bank," as it was called—became the local boulevard, where village society paraded for its own inspection. The husbands walked beside their wives as far as Herald Point, where the abyss of Hottentot Gulch compelled them to reverse their solemn promenade. The little girls looked picturesque in their sunbonnets, or "kappies," their sashes, billowing dresses and white stockings; the little boys looked pain-racked as they walked with their hands in empty "best" pockets, forbidden even to throw pebbles into the surf.

The young men acknowledged to be "taken" walked stiffly beside their brides-to-be. Those whose fate was still to be sealed dawdled in affected nonchalance near a cluster of bright dresses.

In a row along the bank, like sea-gulls along a breakwater, sat the unengaged girls, passing chatter to and fro like a bag of sweets, their impudent backs turned on their would-be suitors. On an island where the number of eligible young men exceeded the number of marriageable young women, the latter could afford a feeling of security. Their laughter had a note of carefree assurance missing from the occasional guffaws of their admirers.

The Tristan girls mature young and courting begins at an early age. Engagements, however, often have to be long, until the future husband has enough wood to build a house and enough sheep and cattle to support a family. There may be great rivalry for the hand of a favourite girl, the most sought-after being generally not the prettiest but the one whose father can offer the biggest dowry.

During the week courting was conducted in the evenings. A young man trying to win a girl would visit her home after his day's work; he would walk straight into the house, where the whole family was gathered round the open hearth; he would find a seat on a box and join in the conversation. Nobody would take much notice of him, least of all the girl. If she was a coveted prize, there might be several suitors sitting in the room side by side, night after night, on the best of terms with one another.

All of them would bring presents—and usually all the presents would be accepted, so that competition was maintained. When a girl allowed a lover to make a pair of moccasins for her, she was favouring him. When she knitted him, in return, a pair of socks he could estimate his chances by the number of rings of "marking" wool round the tops: if there were four such "marks" of affection, he knew he was the favourite. Acceptance was signified when she invited him to bring her his clothes to wash.

After that they would appear openly as an engaged couple, walking together on Sunday afternoons. There was even a special part of the common near the bank top which was, by general understanding, reserved for the engaged.

After evensong, a few of the elders read their Bibles for an hour or less, not so much from devotion as to mark their superiority over the greater number who *couldn't* read their Bibles. Most of the women went to bed as soon as the evening meal was cleared away, being at a loss what else to do when knitting was forbidden. The men smoked for a while, then followed, seeking the simplest excuse for removing clothes in which they could neither work nor lounge at ease.

Closely associated with the Church on Tristan was the school. During our stay it was revived

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All animals can be tamed, the Sirdar had said. Now Leila was in the jungle, finding out if he was right

FOREST PATHS

by NORAH BURKE

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURENT

At the time when this dreadful thing happened, Sirdar Umr Singh was a retired warrior with grey in his mighty black beard, and Leila was a tiny gold child. She was the daughter of missionaries in the Himalayan foothills. They were medical missionaries, with an old-fashioned bungalow for a hospital and dispensary, and they were overwhelmed with work in their huge, wild district, where everything from malaria to snakebite was brought to them for treatment.

Naturally Leila's parents never neglected her, but when Sirdar Umr Singh turned up, prepared to devote his life to the child, they let her go with him whenever he would have her.

The Sirdar was a huge, gentle old man who had spent his life fighting, but now that he had come home to his land, he could pursue the real purpose of his life. He was a born naturalist. Most of his time was now devoted to increasing his already vast knowledge of trees and animals. When he found that Leila also wanted to know about such things, he and she went into the jungle to learn; and since the jungle is no more dangerous than any other place, especially if properly treated, her parents did not object.

The big Sikh had no children of his own, which was a lifelong grief to him, and if he had had them, he would have asked for sons, as befits a warrior; but secretly he adored small girls, and this one slipped easily into his heart.

She was five years old, a naughty baby angel with a will of her own, and she wrapped the good old man round her little finger in no time at all. When she held a tree trunk with one sunny arm so as to peep round it without showing herself, he saw the little-girl arm on the rough bark and loved her greatly.

She could already climb like a monkey and walk four or five miles without noticing it. So she did not hinder him and if, on the way home, she became tired, he carried her. Then sometimes she fell asleep on his shoulder, and her hair swung on his back like an end of yellow scarf.

One day he called for her at the Mission, and he was in his jungle clothes. Normally he wore plain white muslin, and well-wound turbans which he took off whole, like a hat, so that they did not have to be re-wound every time; sometimes he was splendid in pink and gold, but today he was wearing the remains of khaki uniform and puggaree. Leila had been put into blue, with white socks and shoes but, when she saw him, she dashed off and tore her way out of all that and into the mud-pie dress that she wore for these outings.

"Be brown, be still, be silent," Umr Singh had taught her, "and the forest will open its paths to you."

They set off together their usual way, past the two coral trees and the purple *bauhinia*, then skirting the deserted garden of a temple that had fallen into disuse, though people still brought milk and marigolds to it.

The place was a ruin, inhabited by monkeys and lizards. Visitors kept to the paths because of snakes. Once, when Leila and Umr Singh were late home, after dark, he had insisted on carrying her at this place, although she was not tired and resisted him. Also, he had taken a stick and tapped the path in front of him all the way past the temple, to tell any snakes that he was coming, and please get out of the way.

Leila must have been thinking of that evening because, as she skipped along beside him now, she asked: "What do snakes eat, Sirdar Sahib?"

"The python kills barking deer and other such animals."

"And a cobra?"

"The *nag* eats frogs and rats, and I saw one drink of the milk that people still leave here at this temple. Snakes like dry places to live in. They like old walls and ruins, and they like milk. That's why there are still some here from the time when they belonged to the temple. In the bazaars you can buy models of snakes made in brass or silver or terra-cotta. The coils of the serpent hold a little bowl for the milk which the real snake will drink when it is put for him."

"Shall we do that?"

"No, we shall not, baba-child. Snakes are sacred, but also they are dangerous. Respect them and let them go their way. We do not have the jewel in the cobra's head to cure snakebite. We do not know the secret plant the mongoose knows." And Umr Singh also said: "Never anger a snake, baba. If you meet one, stand still, and it will slip aside. The world, by the way, is supported upon a cobra. Did I tell you the time I found the nest of a serpent eagle?"

In Umr Singh's vast and gorgeous imagination, reality and legend marched side by side. They had not yet reached the place where they always stopped talking, so Leila slipped her hand in his as they went along through cultivation towards forest, while he told her things he knew, selecting here and there from the treasure chest.

He spoke of tiger and peacock, and of tailor-birds' nests which no serpent can enter. He told her of snake-stones and famous gems: of the Gwalior carvings, of the two-edged dagger and the five Ks, and the Golden Temple of the Sikhs — at Amritsar.

They went on sunlit paths, where dust three inches deep moved like cream round their feet. They ate *bher*-berries, whose pink and yellow flesh was so deliciously sweet-sour that Leila always shivered and laughed and made him reach her more. And he in his turn asked her to repeat lessons and name the golden mohur tree they passed, the cassia, jacaranda and flame-of-the-forest.

So, presently, they were at the place of no-talking-now-unless-I-say. Here there was a dried-up river bed and animal paths instead of man-made ones, and the deep, warm sand was full of footprints new and old: no more dust on the air now, or squeal of bullock cart, or yap of scratching pariah; instead, wind and leaves making the ceaseless rustle of a forest.

Umr Singh pointed to some tracks in the sand and drew a sign-picture in the air of a porcupine.

I see chital marks too, said Leila, also in their sign language. *New ones.*

Yes. A hind with her young, replied Umr Singh. Later he would tell her that the deer had separated from the herd to give birth, but was now on her way with her fawn to rejoin the others.

They followed the new prints, through all the scribble of old ones, and were hoping to come upon doe and fawn together, but farther up the *nullah* they found the place where a panther had killed the mother.

The information in the sand was obvious, and there were drops of brown blood dried on the stones. Clearly, the panther had killed the mother but not the young one. Umr Singh stood up and looked about him.

They discovered the fawn almost at once in some grass close by, and came up to it quite easily, for the little creature had broken a leg in a root, possibly as it dashed away when the mother was attacked.

It lay staring, and breathing fast. When Umr Singh picked it up, it struggled at first desperately, but slowly quieted in his firm hold till at last it lay panting, all the fragile body full of heartbeat.

"I can mend this leg," said the old Sikh. "Let us get home. After that, we will tame the animal."

"Can you tame chital?"

"All animals can be tamed."

So they took the fawn home and laid it on hay in a chicken basket, and gave it water, which it ignored, while Umr Singh made the splints.

He took a cane of the fine *ringal* bamboo, measured and cut off a piece, split it and cleaned away the marrow. Then he smoothed it by

uddenly the big Sikh saw her. She stood barefooted on the stones efore the temple, in front of the largest cobra he had ever seen

working it in sand. He took silk-cotton that had been collected last spring from a *semal* tree, and gave it to Leila to pick over to get the seeds out, so it should be perfectly soft.

When this was done, he set the leg and padded and bound it, and tied the splints on with lengths of rag. Then they got a little brass bowl of scented goat milk, Umr Singh wet the fawn's lips, and presently it began to drink.

Each day they spent time with their pet, which grew and prospered.

"We are taming a chital," Leila told her parents. "Umr Singh knows how."

"He is a very special man," agreed her father. "It is far more difficult to tame than to kill—to mend than to break, and not everyone can do it. I wonder if you are one of them, Leila?"

So next day she asked the Sirdar, and he replied: "To tame an animal, baba, first give him the food he wants. He will be too frightened to eat, at the beginning, but later he will. Next, never alarm him. Do not wear white, nor move sharply. You know that already.

"Then there is another thing: do not be afraid yourself. You remember what I told you about jungle animals? A few, like bears and crocodiles, must always be avoided. Also, the musth wild elephant, or a tigress with cubs. The rest—if you do not fear or frighten them, nothing will happen to you. They too prefer to get away.

"Then also," he said, "there is something else. It has no name, it comes from inside us, but—" he nodded at the fawn "—they know."

The fawn reached and pulled at a corner of the oily blanket on which he lay, in the wooden box that was now his bed. He began to chew.

"Is that the right food, Sirdar Sahib?" Leila laughed out aloud.

At the sound, the little animal leaped and would have bolted. There was a clatter of splint on wood as he tried to use the injured leg.

Umr Singh turned on her. "That is exactly what I have just told you not to do," he scolded. "If you frighten it like that, it will break its leg all over again."

Leila's mouth went down.

"There, baba." He patted her with one big brown hand. It covered nearly the whole of her back. Both little shoulder blades were in his palm, like wings. He squatted beside her. She put her face into his neck and her tears damped him.

She said: "I love you, Sirdar. I don't like you to be cross with me."

"And I love you, baba." He took a corner of turban and dabbed her eyes. "Don't cry again. "Listen . . . listen. We are going to be such clever naturalists, you and I. We shall swim the rivers and sleep in trees. We shall walk the wild paths and tame far more difficult animals than a baby chital. A baby panther, perhaps? A baby tiger?

"Look, the jungle begins at this doorway and it goes on up into the real hills, to the place where the river begins. Up there are snow and gold demons. One day we shall see it all. There is nothing we cannot do. We shall go unarmed into the jungle, because that is the better way, and we shall see things other men do not see.

"Now," he said, when she had cheered up, "take and feed the fawn. You, not me. We need not keep to milk. Try this leaf."

So she offered it. The fawn looked at the leaf with one eye, then the other. He accepted it.

"See?" said Umr Singh. . . .

THE next day Leila did not appear at his house as she had been doing for some time now, so Umr Singh went to find out why.

"The child has gone to meet you," one of the orderlies told him. "You must have passed her on the way."

"I have not seen her."

"She took milk and curds for the fawn."

"Milk and curds?"

He walked away, thinking. Then, slopped on the baked earth, he saw milk. Farther on there was more. He saw the print of her shoe in the dust.

He followed the marks. They led him to the ruined temple. He began to run. "Leila-baba?" he called out loudly.

There was no reply; only sunlit silence.

He ran, calling, and suddenly he saw her. She was standing before the temple, where people still laid offerings of rice and torn cloth. Out of respect for a holy place she had taken off her shoes, as is the custom, and she stood barefoot in front of the largest cobra Umr Singh had ever seen.

It was more than five feet long, very dark, with straw yellow, and he knew the dark ones were the worst of all.

What was to be done? In the first icy shock, his one reflex action was to stop dead, because any sudden movement by him or her might make the cobra strike. He stood rooted, with sweat breaking out all over his body. He thought: *and I, in white. . . .*

Behind the big snake he could see the hole in the broken wall where it lived. It was an honoured creature, already half-tamed, and used to man, but deadly nevertheless.

He realized now why Leila had not answered him. She had learned her lesson, and she did not wish to alarm this animal.

No indeed—she meant to feed it. She had placed her bowl of milk and curds on the ground beside her and with a glance at Umr Singh, she signalled silence.

The snake smoothed forward. There was a faint scrape—a dry and dusty glitter as it approached her. It was not yet annoyed, the hood was not dilated, but Umr Singh saw a ripple in the ribs just behind the head, as if the reptile were not quite sure of its safety, and in a moment could throw itself up with spread hood, ready to strike.

The best hope would be if the child would retreat on tiptoe backwards, by herself. He tried to whistle to her, but his pale, dry lips produced no sound. He tried again, and succeeded. When she met his eyes, the Sirdar signalled her urgently to come to him, but with extreme quietness.

She shook her wilful head, and then he noticed that she was holding a forked stick, and that she meant to use it. She must have heard how to capture a snake, with such a stick pressed down on the neck.

Any hope of whistling her away on tiptoe from the cobra without alarming it, or irritating it by approaching himself, was gone now.

She stood there within the circle of death, protected only by her innocence, and he must get her out immediately, before she touched the snake. In the delicate balance of this moment a single wrong action could bring instantaneous disaster.

HE moved towards her, placing his bare feet in cushions of dust, all his face glistening with sweat as his eyes burned on the beloved child in danger.

Then he was beside her. Very quietly he bent to pick her up, but she shook free. At the flap of her skirt the cobra threw up its head and opened the hood and hissed. So he grabbed the child and whirled her up high into safety.

At the same moment the cobra struck.

Umr Singh received the poison in his leg. There was a sudden stinging pain. He danced in his efforts to stamp the snake off, but it had hold and was chewing down into his flesh. He felt the huge, cold injection of poison. Then the cobra let go and drew itself away swiftly into fallen masonry.

The thought came to him: *I have half an hour to live? An hour perhaps? Unless. . . .*

He knew that his only chance was to receive the right injection within a few minutes of the bite. At the mission they kept all the different anti-venines at the ready.

The Sirdar tied his leg tight above the wound, to prevent circulation, and ran as fast as he could along the path back towards the bungalow, with the sobbing child bumping on his shoulder.

"But Sirdar Sahib, you said—you said. . . ."

Ah yes! All his words that had led to this moment poured back on him like a river.

He said: "Tomorrow I will explain, Baba."

Tomorrow . . . ?

Leila was struggling to be put down, so when they were out of all undergrowth and safe he did so.

"Why are we running?" she panted.

"Because I have been bitten."

She understood all, as well as he did. She gave him one look, let go his hand and raced off on bare feet.

"Baba. . . ."

But she twinkled out of sight towards the mission.

He was an old man, he could not run like this. He sank down gasping by the roadside. . . .

The next thing he knew people were racing towards him with the box of snake kit.

"Can you name the snake, *Sirdarji?*"

"A cobra. Do not blame the child," he begged earnestly. "The fault is entirely mine."

Next moment he felt the life-saving injection entering his blood, the antidote to cobra poison. It was the right one, it was fresh, and given within a few minutes of the bite that now showed as two livid, purple punctures in his calf.

The Sirdar looked up. Everyone was there. Leila, her parents, the mission orderlies, villagers, a crowd, and all with their hearts in their eyes.

A tear escaped the old man and made its way down through the big smile on his face.

"Tomorrow . . ." he planned firmly. THE END

BEGINS IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

THE STRANGEST SHOW ON EARTH

by PETE COLLINS

GARDENER'S PRUNING CHART

FRUITS

	TIME TO PRUNE	METHOD OF PRUNING	COMMENTS
APPLE (young bush tree)	Winter	Cut "maidens" to 3 in. from union of rootstock and scion. Next season: branches half-way back	Second season—produce a tree goblet shape
(older)	Early winter	Remove half leaders. On spur-bearers, cut back laterals to 5 or 6 buds. On tip bearers, remove exhausted stems	On tip bearers, fairly short laterals can be left full length
	In summer	Prune lateral growth, spur bearers only, when vigorous growth slows down	According to growth, this will be June-August
PEAR	Winter	Cut leaders back by about half	Laterals as necessary, while tree is young
PLUMS	Late summer or early autumn	Prune to shape the tree when young; spur-prune only with trees on walls	Paint over all cuts with white lead paint
APRICOTS (on walls)	Winter Summer	Thin out older growths and weak wood Remove breastwood when 2 in. long; tie-in good sideshoots to become main branches	Laterals should be cut back, in early July, to 6 buds
PEACHES AND NECTARINES	Winter Summer	Remove unwanted branches; paint wounds Allow only one good shoot near base of fruiting lateral to grow; one shoot at the tip can also be left	Trees flower on last year's wood and on spurs. Enough young laterals to carry the fruit must be retained
CHERRIES (sweet)	Late summer	Cut out dead branches	Prune as little as possible, and always paint over wounds
(morello)	Late winter Late winter	Cut out dead or weak wood Cut out some of the oldest wood	
GOOSEBERRIES (young)	Winter	Cut back leaders by half	
(old)	Summer	A little spur pruning, as for apples	Shorten long laterals—June. Remove suckers
BLACK CURRANTS	First winter	Cut to within 9 in. of the ground	
	Summer or autumn	As soon as fruit is gathered, cut out as much of old fruiting wood as possible	It's a good idea to cut half the bushes or half of each bush well back every second year
RED AND WHITE CURRANTS	Winter	Cut out old worn-out wood. Spur prune	
	Summer	Cut off half of each long lateral	Do it just before gathering fruit
RASPBERRIES (summer fruiting)	After fruiting	Cut out canes that have fruited	
	Early spring	Tip the very tall canes after tying to supports	
BLACKBERRIES, LOGANBERRIES, ETC.	After fruiting	Cut out entirely old canes that have fruited	Exception: on vigorous varieties, when half the canes may remain

FORMAL HEDGES

	HEIGHT	SPEED OF GROWTH	WHEN CLIPPED
CARPINUS	Medium	Fair	August
CUPRESSUS LAWSONIANA	Tall	Fairly quick	July
CUPRESSUS MACROCARPA	Tall	Very quick	July and August. (Not a long-lived subject as a hedge)
EUONYMUS JAPONICUS	Medium	Fair	July and August
FAGUS (Beech)	Medium	Fair	August. Leaves remain during winter
LIGUSTRUM (Privet)	Medium	Quick	Frequently, as needed
LONICERA NITIDA	Medium	Quick	June and August
TAXUS BACCATA (Yew)	Low	Fair	July and August
ILEX (Holly)	Tall	Slow	July and August
THUYA LOBBII	Tall	Quick	July and August

FLOWERING AND INFORMAL HEDGES

	HEIGHT IN FEET	TIME TO PRUNE
BERBERIS DARWINII	6	After flowering (where pruning is necessary)
,, STENOPHYLLA	6	After flowering ,,
COTONEASTER SIMONSII	5	August and February ,,
ESCALLONIA MACRANTHA	5	After flowering ,,
FORSYTHIA SPECTABILIS	6	May ,,
LAVENDER	2-3	After flowering ,,
RHODODENDRON PONTICUM	8	After flowering ,,
ROSA RUGOSA	5	March and August ,,
ULEX EUROPAEUS	5	After flowering ,,
VERONICA TRAVERSII	5	Spring ,,

FOLD AT THIS LINE

John Bull presents

PERCY THROWER'S GUIDE TO

A LOVELY GARDEN FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR

Shrewd planning and attention to detail can mean beauty through the four seasons

IN the month of May wise gardeners, surrounded as they are by colourful results from imaginative autumn planning and the winter's spadework, decide to keep their horizons beautiful for as long as nature will allow.

Permanent herbaceous plants in the garden, as well as annuals already sown as seed, will of course flower through the summer without much attention. But there's more to be done to keep them looking fresh, neat and colourful into the autumn. They must be thinned, dead flowers should be promptly removed, the flower beds must be well weeded and watered, and pests kept in check.

Freshness and healthiness alone are not enough, however. The colour of the garden's main plants and shrubs should be augmented with bedding plants and specialist extras, such as chrysanthemums and dahlias, which help to extend the season of colour into October.

Bedding plants such as stocks, asters, nemesia, lobelia, alyssum, salvias, petunias, French and African marigolds, and antirrhinums are nearly all on sale from April onwards. But don't be tempted to buy too early. Even now it is risky to bed the plants out, for the slightest touch of frost will kill them. Better to wait until the middle of the month at least, and in the north until early June.

Many people will not buy plants unless they are already in flower. They fail to realize that when plants showing flowers or buds are still in the seedsman's boxes they are starved and will not develop well. If a stock, for example, is in bud when bought it will produce only a single thin spike of flower, instead of several spikes.

Small plants with healthy dark green foliage are the ones to buy. Before planting them in the garden, sprinkle sulphate of potash (¼ oz. per sq. yd.) on the soil to bring out colour, quality blooms, and a good scent in the plants. Then bed the plants 9 in. apart, press soil firmly round their roots, and water them thoroughly.

Planning a colour scheme in a small border of bedding plants can be fun. My favourite scheme is in pink, silver and blue, comprising a bed of pink antirrhinums, begonias, geraniums or petunias, with taller-growing silver foliage plants, such as centaurea, planted in between, and Cambridge blue lobelia round the edge of the bed. Alternatively, silver-leaf cinerarias and silver foliage pyrethrums look exciting planted in conjunction with hard scarlet geraniums or salvias. But they are rather expensive (geraniums cost 24s. a dozen). Geraniums may be planted farther apart, however, and the rest of the bed effectively planted with cheaper plants such as blue lobelia, white alyssum, and nemesia (all about 2s. a dozen) in a wide variety of colours.

The range of colour combinations, in fact, is limitless, for bedding plants flower in white, lavender, blue, pink, purple, yellow, orange, scarlet, red, and crimson. Phlox Drummondii, to take one example, will provide all these colours with the exception of orange, though an entire bed of phlox would tend to be monotonous.

I dislike "flat" beds whether they consist of geraniums, salvias and similar plants, or plants of a different mean height. The standard or tree fuchsia is a useful plant to provide variety in height, and it looks attractive. Leave a saucer-like impression round the stem when planting to facilitate watering once or twice a week.

Chrysanthemums help to prolong colour in the garden, and should be planted at once. The big chrysanthemum shows are in September, when the flowers are at their best, but if the autumn is mild blooms will continue in the garden into November.

Fine new varieties to choose include Peach Una, which possesses lovely in-curving petals, Fred Yule (rich orange bronze), Hope Valley (soft lilac pin), Harold Park (deep buttercup yellow), Florence Horwood (bright rose pink), Geoff Duke (coppery orange bronze), Mary Mona (salmon cerise), White Wings, and Wildfire (bright scarlet bronze with gold reverse petals).

It is essential to encourage the plants to begin

flowering in August, before the frost begins. They should therefore be "stopped" before the end of this month—that is, the young tips of each plant pinched out to encourage shoots to grow from each leaf joint. Side shoots which may grow off the main shoots should be rubbed out, and only one bud at the top of each main shoot left to develop. Four to six shoots on a plant will produce one good quality bloom each. Eight to twelve shoots will provide medium-sized flowers suitable for cutting and use in the house.

The chrysanthemums which need the least attention and yet give masses of single and double flowers of many colours are dwarf-growing varieties —Otley Korean and Windsor Hybrids—which do not require either budding or staking, and are ideal for a colourful display. I recommend Rosina (rose, with a yellow centre), Sungold (pure double yellow), Dream (golden bronze), Brightness (double crimson flowers), Robin (scarlet), and Joy (salmon bronze).

Dahlias, too, bring brilliant colour to the garden in the late summer and autumn. Though their dormant tubers may be planted out now, young plants are so tender that they should not be risked in the open until late May or early June. Remember that they like a lot of moisture.

New varieties may cost 10s. or 15s.—a fine variety called My Choice costs 30s. But the average price is from 1s. 6d. to 3s. a plant. Varieties suitable for cutting and using in the house are Bleasdale (a small orange-scarlet decorative), Carol Ann (vivid orange-scarlet "cactus flowering" variety), Chorus Girl (lilac pink), Edinburgh (rich crimson-purple, with a white tip to each petal). Gerrie Hoek (one of the best small pinks for cutting) and the following pom-pom varieties: Bacchus (bright scarlet), Purple Gem, Little Beeswing (yellow, tipped with red), Jean Lister (white), and Pride of Berlin (mauve-pink).

Autumn flowering bulbs and corms, such as the beautiful pink-flowering bulb Nerine Bowdenii, the Belladonna lily, hardy cyclamen, and autumn crocus, must be planted before the end of July for flowering in the autumn and winter. If you have none of these in your garden, make a note to try them.

Hardy cyclamen, in pink, mauve, white, and true cyclamen, are perfect miniatures of the winter cyclamen grown in pots. They contrast well with tall lilies, commencing to flower in September and lending a gay splash of colour to the garden until the middle of November. They like soil with plenty of leaf mould.

Autumn crocuses should be planted from July to August. Varieties which I recommend are Saffron crocus (large purplish-violet, with orange anthers), speciosus (vivid violet blue, with a yellow centre), and sonatus (elegant rose lavender, with an intense orange zone in the centre).

However carefully a gardener pads out the season by planning a succession of different plants, a garden will appear shabby unless such details as the instant removal of dead flowers are attended to. Support for tall-growing plants is another important part of garden tidiness. I use old pea sticks, or twiggy tree branches—even the prunings from fruit trees—which I push into the soil round and between the clumps, and between the annuals while they are still small. The plants grow up and through the twigs, completely covering them.

Thinning out encourages the flower spikes to be strong and long-lasting. Herbaceous plants such as lupins, delphiniums, heleniums, Michaelmas daisies, and phlox, will grow more shoots from

How to give sweet peas those tall stems

TRAIN THE STEMS ACROSS GROUND TO GIVE AN EXTRA 5-FT. GROWTH; TIE TO CANES WITH RAFFIA. CUT OFF LEAF-STEM TENDRILS

I AM often asked how to grow exhibition quality sweet peas with long stems suitable for cutting. Here are three rules which must be observed:

1. Cut off all the shoots at the base of the plant—except the strongest one which will become the main stem.
2. Rub out side shoots as they appear.
3. Cut off tendrils which will grow at the end of each leaf stem or they will twine round the flower stems and throw them crooked.

The main stem will grow 6 or more inches on some days and should be tied to a 10-ft rod or cane either with raffia or the small metal split rings which are now available in the shops. When a strong-growing stem reaches the top of its support, the ties can be removed and the stem laid along the ground to another cane 5 or 6 ft. away. The stem from the second cane should be trained back to the first cane—a process which allows the stems to grow for another 6 ft. or so and prolongs the flowering period by a month.

When sweet peas have started to flower they should be fed once a week with dried blood or liquid fertilizer or specialized sweet pea fertilizer which will contain a high percentage of potash. Plenty of moisture is needed to keep them in flower into September. If dead flowers are removed before they run to seed the plant will flower for a longer period.

A simple way to graft your own roses

REMOVE THE SOIL ROUND A BRIAR ROOTSTOCK TO JUST BELOW THE GROUND LEVEL

CUT A T ½ IN. DEEP — OPEN THE CUT — INSERT THE CUTTING AND TIE

AN interesting mid-summer job is to bud a rose on to a briar rootstock. Choose a well-matured rose bud which has not started into growth. Cut the bud away from the parent bush, complete with leaf and a shield of bark.

Now cut along the rootstock stem for 1½ in. just below ground level—except in the case of standard roses, which should be cut about 4 ft. above the ground. Cross-cut at the top of the first cut to form a T, then peel back the bark from the top of the T, on each side of the upright, and insert the shield of bark, complete with bud and leaf, behind the bark of the stock. Bind the rose bark firmly to the rootstock with raffia above and below the bud and replace the soil. Half the leaf should then be cut off to prevent a strong leaf robbing the bud of moisture. In a few weeks the leaf stem can be brushed off—an indication that union has been made.

THINNING FRUIT

IN July the wise gardener thins the fruit on his apple trees. Groups of more than three apples on a single twig or spur are thinned so that not more than two fruits remain. The biggest of the apples—invariably the centre or "king" fruit—should be the first to go. Thinning helps to ensure shapely, even-sized fruits, and the tree is encouraged to produce another good crop the following year.

If there is a very heavy crop, pears, plums and damsons should also be thinned in the same way or the trees may not produce much fruit the following year. Peach trees should be thinned until the remaining peaches are at least 9 in. apart.

Gooseberries can be left alone until they reach bottling size—about the size of marbles. The bushes should then be thinned leaving berries, 2 or 3 in. apart, which will ripen into dessert fruit.

POTTED PLANTS

NO house should be without winter-flowering chrysanthemums and cinerarias, which bring colour to the dull months.

My favourite chrysanthemums of the winter variety are Loveliness (pale pink), Purple Loveliness, Red Favourite, Pink Favourite, Balcombe Perfection (orange-bronze) and Shirley Late Red. They should be planted in the garden now, or placed in pots (diameter 8 or 9 in.), using John Innes potting compost number three, and then left alongside the garden path for the summer months.

In the middle of May, the young centre tip of each plant should be picked out. Up to five shoots will then grow on each plant, and their tips in turn should be removed in early July.

In September those plants planted out in the garden for the summer months should be potted and, together with those plants already potted, moved into a greenhouse or placed near a light window. Flowering begins in November.

Cinerarias for winter flowering (I recommend multiflora nana) should be sown as seed in a garden frame now and the seedlings transplanted into progressively larger pots until October when (in pots of 5 or 6 in. diameter) they are moved inside. The young plants must be shaded from the full glare of the summer sun and watered frequently.

Useful crops to grow just beside the kitchen door

HERBS need little cultivation and will grow in almost any odd corner, though for convenience of gathering I like to grow them near to the kitchen door.

Mint can be planted this month. It is difficult to keep in check for it spreads below the surface of the soil like a weed. To confine it I sink four planks of wood to form a square in the garden so that the tops of the planks jut slightly above the surface of the soil. The mint will then grow out to the planks but no farther.

Well-established mint may become speckled with brown patches —a fungus disease called brown rust. Then it needs lifting and transplanting.

Parsley, sown thinly in drills ½ in. deep this month, should never be transplanted, though the young seedlings will need thinning to 9 in. apart. It is a herb which makes an attractive edging to a garden path because of its fern-like leaves.

Thyme, planted in the autumn, can be propagated in May simply by placing a heap of fresh soil in the centre of the low-growing, bush-like plants. Splay out the branches so that they will root in the fresh soil.

Sage cuttings are taken—anytime from May to August—by pulling away shoots 6 or 8 in. long from the main stem of the plant. It is important to ensure that a "heel"—a portion of the old stem—remains attached to the base of each cutting.

Basil, used in finger bowls and for flavouring, should be planted as seed in the early spring, hardened off in a cold frame and planted out this month in a sunny border (8 in. between each seedling). Sweet basil is the best variety.

Chervil is another useful herb to grow for flavouring soups or for mixed salads. It can be sown at monthly intervals until October, preferably in a moderately light and rich soil. I like to grow it near the base of bushes beside the garden path.

Fennel succeeds in any soil and grows wild in some parts of the country. It should, however, be sown (or propagated by the division of roots) in March. It is useful for flavouring sauces for fish.

Marjoram, which can be used in summer drinks, is sown in shallow drills in April. Later the seedlings are thinned to 6 in. apart.

Tarragon, a perennial herb which is mixed with salad vegetables or used for making tarragon vinegar, needs a well-drained, rich soil. Prepare a bed in April or May with plenty of well-rotted manure and leaf mould.

All herbs are easy to dry. Store them for the winter in a warm room.

Hydrangeas can be relied on for garden colour

An easy plant to grow—if you start now

THE hydrangea is one of the easiest plants to propagate from cuttings in May. Look at the shoots on the plants closely and choose for propagation those which do not show buds. Then the sequence is:

1. With a sharp knife cut a non-flowering shoot through the stem below a pair of leaves.
2. Remove the two leaves nearest to the cut.
3. Dip the end of the cutting into one of the hormone rooting powders.
4. Put the cutting in a small pot of sandy soil, water thoroughly, then stand the pot in a plastic bag and tie the open end to exclude the air.

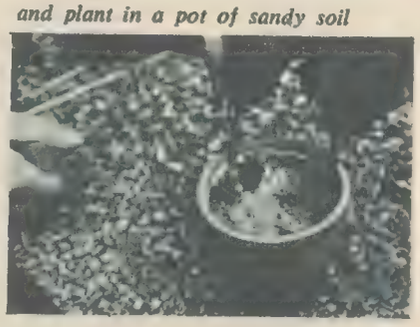
If the pot is stood in a greenhouse or on a windowsill in a warm room the cutting will form roots in three or four weeks. Each plant is then potted separately in a pot 3½ in. in diameter, and in July the young tip is pinched out of each upright growing stem. In May next year, the plant should produce from two to six flowers.

If blue hydrangeas are desired, natural whites and pinks can be turned a perfect blue and deep reds can be made to go purple by the use of a colourant, available in powder form, which is sprinkled on soil round the plants two or three times in the spring, summer and autumn. Hydrangeas growing in acid soils, and at some seaside resorts, go blue without artificial treatment.

Cut off a hydrangea shoot . . .

. . . dip it in hormone rooting powder . . .

. . . and plant in a pot of sandy soil



Camellias are ideally suited to town life

Propagate these exotic plants now, and they will grow out of doors

CAMELLIAS are among the finest of exotic-looking flowers to grow in a cool greenhouse. Indeed, in most parts of the country, varieties such as Elegans, Williamsii and Gloire de Nantes can be grown outside, preferably in a position which is partly in the shade.

The shrubs should be potted this month in a mixture of three parts lime-free soil, two parts of peat, one of coarse sand, and a handful of bone meal to a bucketful of the mixture.

They can be grown in a tub or painted metal oil drum with drainage holes punched in the bottom. They are particularly fine town plants because the dust and grime of industrial areas easily washes off the glossy green leaves. They are attractive placed each side of a door.

Propagation is done before the end of May. Choose a leaf with a bud attached and cut with a knife down the branch behind the bud and leaf, slicing off a sliver of bark still attached to the leaf stem and bud. Moisten the cut surface, dip in a hormone rooting powder and place in a flower pot, three-quarters full of sand, so that the bark and the bud are below the sand but the leaf is above it. Keep the sand moist by standing the pot in a saucer of water and cover the pot with a piece of glass. When a shoot begins to grow from the bud, the cutting should be repotted in a small flower pot containing soil, peat and sand.

each clump than it is wise to leave. All except five to seven of the strongest shoots should be removed in May.

Weeds rob the plants of important foods and reduce their vitality. It is vital, therefore, to tackle them before they can run to seed.

Groundsel, chickweed, shepherd's purse and annual meadow grass all grow, seed, grow from seed, and seed again, in the same season, unless they are checked. They get buried in the soil and only those near to the surface germinate at once. When the soil is turned next spring another batch of seeds will grow—a process which is repeated until the adage that "one year's seed means seven years' weed" is proved unhappily correct.

Selective weed killers cannot be used, except on lawns, without endangering the plants, but this does not mean that weeding need be a back-bending, wearying task with a trowel or hand fork. I use a Dutch hoe, often with a blade so small (3 in. across) that it will steer between the plants in any border without damaging them. Use the hoe often from May onwards, working backwards, ripping up the weeds with a blade which penetrates just below the soil. This is a job for sunny days, when uprooted weeds soon shrivel and die.

Watering may be impossible in a very dry summer. Then lawn mowings, garden compost, peat, manure or even straw spread on the soil will retard evaporation and reduce the necessity for watering. Any fresh water which can be spared should be given to potted plants first, for garden plants are better placed to seek out moisture.

When there is a dry summer but no drought sensible watering of flower borders in the cool of the evening is a big factor in keeping plants fresh and healthy. Many people make the mistake of skimping the water. Don't just sprinkle, soak the soil through. Test the depth of the soaking with a trowel and don't be satisfied until the soil is damp 6 or 8 in. down.

Pests need tackling ruthlessly, but the number of fungicides and insecticides on the market is now so vast that many gardeners become confused. Either they spend too much on patent killers, or overlook some of the pests to their cost.

Greenfly, whitefly, blackfly, caterpillars, bishop bugs and red spider mites all attack plants above soil level. I recommend spraying with any insecticide containing either BHC—benzene hexachloride—or derris.

Wireworm, onion fly, carrot fly and cabbage root fly do their work beneath the soil. Counter them with a preparation containing aldrin.

The best way to deal with slugs, I have found, is to crush a meta fuel tablet, mix it with an equal part of breadcrumbs, and heap the mixture round plants where the slugs are feeding. Cover the heaps with small pieces of slate or tile to keep the birds off. Patent slug-skilling liquids can be used instead.

Troublesome fungus diseases include various forms of mildew which affect the foliage and flowers of plants; potato blight which damages both potatoes and tomatoes; and club root, the enemy of all members of the brassica family. I choose one of the copper sprays for dealing with mildew and other fungus diseases above soil level. Club root is difficult to control, but if the roots of young brassicas are dipped into a creamy paste consisting of water and 4 per cent calomel dust before planting, 75 per cent control can be achieved, even in badly infected soils.

One of the most persistent pests in fruit is the raspberry beetle. Unless the raspberry bushes are sprayed once a fortnight, while in flower, with a spray containing BHC (DDT harms the bees), white bugs hatch out which eat their way into the centre of the fruit.

Apple and pear trees should be sprayed with BHC or DDT as soon as the petals of the flowers have fallen to counter the apple sawfly and codling moth. Lime sulphur added to the spray will prevent scab, a fungus disease which blemishes the fruit in dark brown patches.

A gardener can never afford to be complacent, and only constant attention to detail will keep his garden in tip-top shape.

Roses, for example, cannot be near-perfect unless they are lovingly tended. Many of the young branches growing on rose bushes this month have one terminal or centre bud round which side buds frequently form. Unless the aim is to have a mass display of roses, side buds can be cut away. This is called disbudding and produces better blooms.

Everyone looks forward to the first roses in June and, as soon as the first batch fades, the dead flowers should be cut back to a strong bud from which a further growth will produce autumn flowers. This applies to all varieties of rose except the ramblers and a few of the climbers.

Feeding rose bushes with a little specialized rose fertilizer in June or July, and frequent hoeing, will improve the quality of the later blooms.

Sowing a lawn, or improving an old one, is a worthwhile May-time task because a good lawn can make even a poor garden look attractive.

Sow a lawn this way: fork the ground 3 to 4 in. deep, tread the soil to break up lumps, rake 2 oz. of fertilizer into each square yard of surface soil, add peat or fine ashes if the soil is clay, rake the surface fine and even and ensure that it is free from weeds, then sow 1½ oz. of seed per square yard.

Only the best lawn seeds, free from rye grass, should be used. A good mixture is 80 per cent Chewings fescue and 20 per cent New Zealand

Follow a few simple rules and your garden can have attractive borders well into the autumn

There's nothing to beat the delicacies that you grow yourself

MUSHROOMS

MUSHROOM cultivation on a modest scale—in a cellar, garden frame, shed, or in the open—can be successful though mushrooms face competition from other fungi and from many diseases. With luck and efficient preparation, however, a mushroom bed 2 ft. wide, and as long as you care to make it, will produce one pound of mushrooms per square foot.

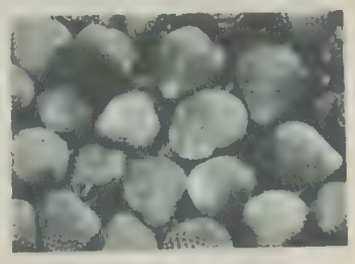
First, place stable manure or composted straw, preferably under sufficient cover to protect it from the weather, in a heap in the garden; add enough water to keep the compost just moist, and turn the heap with a fork every few days. This generates heat. When the compost has lost its rank smell it is probably ready to be made into a fairly firm bed, 8 or 9 in. deep.

As a final test of its readiness for bedding, squeeze some of the compost in your fist and, if it is moist but not moist enough for water to seep through your fingers, make up the bed. The temperature in the bed must be below 80 deg. before the bed is spawned.

Mushroom spawn is usually bought in packets, broken into pieces the size of a walnut and planted in the compost, at 9 in. intervals and 2 in. deep. When, after two or three weeks, white thread-like tentacles of mycelium spread through the compost, the bed can be coated with a 2 in. layer of reasonably sterile soil (soil taken from grassland, about 6 in. below the turf, is ideal).

The soil of the bed should be frequently sprayed—but not enough for water to soak down to the manure. Mushrooms should show in six or eight weeks.

After the first gathering, spray the bed over with a desertspoonful of salt dissolved in a gallon of water. This encourages more mushrooms to grow.



STRAWBERRIES

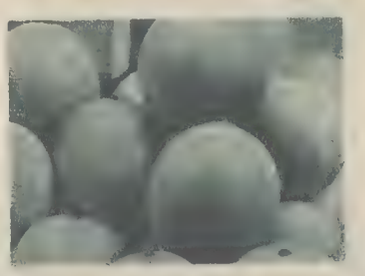
CLIMBING strawberry plants developed by a German grower recently became available in Britain. I am looking forward to trying them, for it is claimed that they will fruit from June through the summer into October. Each plant (they cost 10s. 6d. each) is said to produce up to 12 lb. of fruit.

The plants are trained up netting or trellis and, in a sunny, open position, some of them will grow up to seven feet high. This has several advantages—no stooping is required to tend and pick the fruit, straw need not be placed beneath plants to keep the fruit off the ground, the slug menace is eliminated, and there is less chance of losing the fruits from the fungus disease Botrytis.

Of course, the plants need careful tying to supports as they grow, but otherwise cultivation is basically the same as for earthbound strawberries. Prepare the ground with a fairly heavy dressing of peat manure or compost, plus a handful of bone meal per square yard, and wash a teaspoonful of sulphate of potash into each square yard of soil once or twice during the fruiting season.

Most gardeners however, must rely on conventional strawberry plants for fruit this year. Now is the time to protect the plants from frost. Straw, or straw mats, should be placed lightly over the plants at night—or you can push the flower trusses in jam jars laid on their sides. This also keeps slugs at bay, and later helps the fruit to ripen.

Strawberries are propagated in July, when many gardeners choose a few healthy plants and remove their flower trusses. This certainly ensures that all the plants' energy produces runners, but it also denudes the garden of valuable fruit. Choose not more than six runners from each of the most healthy-looking plants which have produced good fruit. Fasten each runner to the top of a separate three-inch pot filled with garden soil and placed firmly in the ground between the rows. Provided that the soil in the pots is kept moist, each runner will root and form a strawberry plant for planting in early September.



MELONS

A MELON is an exciting fruit to grow in a garden frame recently emptied of bedding plants or spring vegetables. If necessary it can be grown in a makeshift frame about 4 ft. square, built of boards and with a glass or polythene top.

Plant cantaloupe or frame melon plants on a mixture (four bucketfuls) of four parts of soil, two of decayed manure or peat, and one of sand plus eight handfuls of John Innes base manure, and four of lime, mounded in the centre of the frame. Each plant will grow a long runner, the tip of which should be pinched out beyond the fifth leaf. Shoots will grow and the tip of each should be pinched out beyond the first leaf. A further shoot will grow from each lateral shoot and it is on these that the melons develop.

Pollinate more flowers than you need by exposing the stamens of the male flowers and inserting them into the female, melon-bearing flowers when they open up. A week or two later, when the melons are the size of golf balls, choose four of equal size and cut off the rest. Then the melons will develop together and cultivation is much simplified.

Until the fruits begin to ripen keep the plants well supplied with water and with general fertilizer in solution once a week. When you can smell the ripening melons, stop watering and feeding the plant, so that the fruit does not split. In hot weather open the frame slightly, to increase ventilation, and in very hot weather shade the plants at midday.

TOMATOES

Now is the time to think of ordering tomato plants to plant in a sunny position in June. I recommend Sunrise, Open Air Wonder, Essex Wonder, Money Maker and Market King, and I advise buying plants from pots, or in soil blocks, not from boxes. Then there is less disturbance of the roots when planting—in a soil which should contain either peat or garden compost, to help to retain moisture.

Another rule to follow when buying tomato plants is to pick out those plants on which the distance between the leaf joints on the stem is short—preferably, too, with the flower buds of the first truss showing on the tip of the plant. Then you can be sure that the plant is ready for planting.

As the plants develop, side shoots should be rubbed out while small and, when a plant shows its fourth truss of flower, it is time to pinch out the young tip of the plant one leaf above that truss. Spray the flowers with water in dry weather, or caress flower after flower lightly with a camel-hair brush, to assist pollination. If this method of "setting" the flowers does not work, then patent hormone sprays are available and, after their use, every fruit is certain to develop.

Although the first fruit should be ripe in August, earlier and better fruit is obtained by adding a teaspoonful of superphosphate once, and sulphate of potash three times to the soil before the end of July. Plants should also be treated with colloidal copper spray (twice, in July) to combat potato blight which afflicts most outdoor tomato plants in moist weather.

Bush tomatoes, which do not need staking or their sideshoots removing, are increasingly popular. They can be planted in rows across the garden. As the fruits develop straw should be spread round the plants to keep the fruit off the soil. The bushes produce good quality tomatoes, though of moderate size. They must be sprayed underneath the foliage, as well as on top. There was a useful tip about this in "Your Garden And Mine" recently. (JOHN BULL, April 20).

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brown-top (ready-mixed it costs about 7s. a pound).

Fifteen ounces of the seed is needed for a lawn of 10 sq. yd. Split the seed into equal halves and sprinkle one half (a small handful per square yard) on the lawn while walking in one direction, and the other half from the other direction. This helps to guarantee an even spread of the seed, which should be raked lightly into the surface—and protected from birds by the use of black cotton.

In three weeks the grass should be an inch high and ready for a light rolling. Three weeks later it can be mowed to within an inch of the ground. In each mowing after that, lower the bottom blade of the mower progressively, until it is half an inch from the ground. Grass should never be cut to less than half an inch.

Keeping a lawn fresh into the autumn depends upon the frequency of mowing—once a week from May until late September, except in very dry weather, when more grass should be left to shade the roots. It also depends upon the use of lawn fertilizer in the early summer (2 oz. per sq. yd., mixed with equal parts of fine soil or sand) and upon the frequency of watering.

Continual watering will keep a lawn green, but if the water will not penetrate very dry brown patches I add one teaspoonful of any washing detergent to a gallon of water, and water the patches with this before using clear water, which will then soak more easily.

Stocking a basket made of wood or galvanized wire is an art which few gardeners seem to have mastered. Yet nothing looks more forlorn than a basket inadequately stocked.

First, line the basket with fresh green moss. Add John Innes potting compost number three, press it firm and, in the centre, plant a fuchsia, geranium, or other upright-growing plant. Round it, plant ivy-leaf geraniums or verbena interspersed with trailing lobelia (four of each plant should be adequate).

Alternatively, plant petunia and variegated trailing nepeta, the object being to stock the basket so thoroughly that the framework is hidden by flowers and foliage.

Stand the basket in the shelter of a wall, facing the sun, until the end of May, then hang it. To keep the plants flowering from June to October, I find it necessary to water the basket every day, rain or no rain. On hot days I water twice a day and, once a week, add a desertspoonful of a general fertilizer to a gallon of the water.

Window boxes, which should measure at least 8 in. broad by 8 in. deep, are consolation for people without gardens. They also improve an existing garden because they flower on a different level, and lend charming colour to the house itself.

On the sunny side of a house a window box, which should be filled with John Innes compost number three, may be stocked with hardy annuals, as well as bedding plants. I have found gleam nasturtiums (yellow or red), alonsoa (scarlet), nemophila (blue), linum (scarlet and blue), and linaria (mixed colours) effective, and like to plant a little mignonette for scent. When the first array of boxed plants is finished, bulbs, wallflowers, forget-me-nots and winter flowering pansies may be substituted.

The choice of flowers for the shaded side of a house is limited, but fuchsias, fibrous rooted begonias and trailing lobelia will grow there.

Water the boxes once a week at first, but when roots fill the box daily watering may be necessary.

Wallflowers and forget-me-nots flower from March to May. Plants due to flower next spring should be ordered in seed form now and sown at the end of this month or early in June. I always choose compact-growing varieties—Orange Bedder, Golden Bedder and Fire King, are my favourite wallflowers, and I like the dwarf strain of royal blue forget-me-nots.

Winter flowering plants and shrubs already in the garden should now be "mulched" with a layer of peat manure or garden compost to help them to build up wood for the winter. New ones for winter flowering should be planted in November.

My favourite shrubs of this type are viburnum Fragrans (pinky white flowers and beautifully scented), mahonia Bealei (the winter-flowering berberis with long racemes of lemon-yellow flowers from December onwards), and prunus subhirtella autumnalis (double pinky-white flowers).

Helleborus niger, the Christmas rose, grown in partial shade where the soil is fairly moist, will provide waxlike white flowers suitable for Christmas decoration.

Finally, may I recommend iris stylosa. Planted against a wall it throws up winter buds which open out into beautiful pale blue flowers when placed in water in a room.

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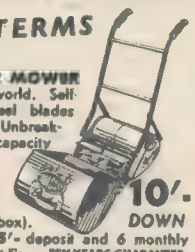

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Best foot forward

Continued from page 11

pounds at birth—Mollie was subject to migraines and those nervous prostrations which meant lying down in darkened rooms. She was afraid of bangs and loud noises, yet was married to a man who spent much of his time firing off a gun.

Life with him was too much like living in proximity to accurately reported but inaccessible, unexploded bombs. He could give me a peerless hunter, but burst into a rage when I asked for a few extra shillings pocket money. His humour was robust and sometimes unnerving, tending to a preference for the jape and the practical joke.

I was a credit to him in the hunting field, but had little impact on his life elsewhere. My parents were frequently away from home, either hunting with or visiting their many friends, or shooting big game in India and Africa. In consequence, while being provided with the best of everything, I was very much alone. During school holidays I was often farmed out on strangers.

A bewildering change of boarding schools—I was sent to four before I was ten years old—and a succession of nurses at home did nothing to "settle me down." At school I was continually fighting and always in trouble, my leaving being invariably at the request of the authorities.

My school reports were deplorable, but I was far stronger than most boys of my age and my prowess on the playing field did something to mollify my father's wrath. Premature success at games led me to attach a disproportionate value on physical power, something for which I was to suffer later when the loss of my legs barred me from all violent activity.

With changes of school went changes of home. In 1926, when his father died, Father saw the chance to realize his life's ambition: the commercial exploitation of the caves at Wookey Hole. Hitherto the three underground chambers at Wookey had been a local curiosity, a poor relation of Cheddar Gorge. The village lovers found them convenient, and it was amusing for the more active of Father's guests to poke around among the stalactites and grottoes with candle and rope.

The great importance of Wookey Hole for our family had always been the issue of the River Axe, which provided the power to run the paper mill on whose profits my great-grandfather had made a fortune.

Father had no interest in making paper and in any case control of the mill had passed to a cousin. But his father had left him a lot of money and with this he immediately set about opening the caves.

His first act was to sell Glencot and move to a smaller but hardly less expensive house at Luckington, in Wiltshire, some fifty miles from Wookey Hole. The Manor House, as it was called, was a beautiful place in the centre of the Beaufort country, but it was not beautiful enough for Father. He poured money into it with his usual gusto.

Two years later, when he was asked to become Master of the Mendip Hounds, Father sold all this at a considerable loss and installed us in Bubwith Farm, a fifteenth-century farmhouse in the centre of Wookey Hole.

When not hunting, he was busy with dynamite, concrete and a small army of workmen and architects. Special plant was installed to floodlight the caves. Plans were drawn up and work put in hand for a car-park, restaurants, a museum and a swimming pool. Guides were engaged and rushed through an intensive course in Celtic Britain and geognosy. Father swept aside those of the family who dared to inject a timid counsel of caution.

As the money ran out, some decision on my future had to be made. My father had long since decided that I was an intractable child who needed discipline and a firm hand. The "firm hand" I needed appeared providentially in the person of Captain Superintendent Tracy, commanding the

Nautical College at Pangbourne. My parents met him in the spring of 1932, and the conversation is not difficult to imagine. Naval discipline with its incessant clanging of bells, its escalades to the masthead, its discomfort and grim cleanliness, its long tradition of the lash, here were exactly the things I needed. So, to Pangbourne I went in the summer term of 1933, at the age of thirteen and a few months.

A year later two things happened which were to have incalculable consequences for myself and the family. One was the break-up of my parent's marriage, the other the death of a dog.

One afternoon I took a long walk alone in Ebbor Wood. I had whistled up the terriers; there were four or five

CONSCIENCE—1

Conscience is, in most men, an anticipation of the opinion of others.

Sir Henry Taylor

of them, and there was Mollie's old bitch, Jezebel. I had known Jezebel all my life, for she was now rising ten.

Jezebel, although my mother's dog, was a great favourite of Father. But she had a weak heart and we had been told to exercise her with care. This, I am afraid, came into my mind too late when Jezebel, set upon by the other and younger dogs in a vicious fight, suddenly collapsed.

I was a good mile from home and I should, knowing her age, have picked up the bitch and carried or walked her slowly back. Instead, I panicked.

My only idea was to get her out of my responsibility and into the hands of a vet without delay. As soon as I could coax her to her feet I alternately walked and ran her back to Bubwith Farm, sometimes lifting her a few yards, but generally making her keep up the fast pace I was setting. She arrived at the farm in great distress. A few days later, after I had returned to Pangbourne, she died.

It was fortunate that I was not at Bubwith when this happened. Father's rage, as my mother told me later, was beyond belief. The sentence on what he thought to be my guilt for the death of Jezebel was sent to me at Pangbourne. I was to be banished to a South Wales farm for the next two holidays.

The farmer who was appointed to be my jailer treated me more as a casual labourer than a paying guest, accepting me reluctantly at the table, and speaking to me sharply at work.

For five weeks I nursed my bitterness consciously, seeking a chance to give it practical and preferably dramatic expression. One evening in September, when we had just completed the harvest, I caught sight of the ricks a hundred yards away across a field.

At that moment—and by accident—my fingers closed round a box of matches in my pocket. I walked casually over to the ricks, turned in behind the nearest, and made quite sure nobody could see me. Then I took out the matches.

The first failed to strike; so did the second. I told myself that if the third failed also I would call the operation off. But it struck and I dropped it at my feet; in a few seconds the small flames were darting like lizards up the tight surface of the rick. Some minutes passed before the alarm was given, and by the time the famer's family could organize a bucket chain the rick was crackling with a merry blaze.

I lent a hand with every expression of anxiety, but my heart was going like a trip hammer. Brought up in the country, I was aware of the enormity of what I had done, and at first I wasn't sure whether to exult or to be dreadfully ashamed.

Then, over this troubled state, another feeling slowly supervened. It was defiance. I resolved then to use my misery as a spur. In the same way, six years later, when flying had made me physically less than a man, I decided to make that enemy the instrument of my rehabilitation.

Standing in the now muddy field, with the hot cinders falling round me, I felt on a sudden wonderfully free.

At Pangbourne Nautical College I found it impossible to keep on the right side of authority. I bumped into rules as an awkward man knocks over small pieces of furniture in an overcrowded room. Yet games, as usual at a British public school, worked their potent magic. Without my impressive list of colours, I believe my indiscipline might have had a drastic sequel.

Games were paramount in my life, and the farthest bound of my ambition was to train myself to be fit to play rugby and cricket for my country. On one thing I had made up my mind: I would never enter the merchant navy. The idea of the Royal branch was not so distasteful.

Meanwhile, at Bubwith Farm, life was uneasy. My father's interest in the caves at Wookey Hole could by now be described as almost an obsession. My mother's health was deteriorating rapidly; so was Father's financial position. Bubwith Farm had ceased to mean very much to me as home, with all the stability and understanding the word suggests.

I began, more and more, to see the future in terms of my own endeavour. I passed the special public school entry examination for the navy late in 1937. I had still no intention of joining the navy and had taken the examination in the spirit of an academic "dare." I was surprised and faintly alarmed by my success, but reassured at once when I was informed that there were no vacancies for the executive branch.

The situation at home had worsened. As if he had not enough on his hands at Wookey, Father, through the unfounded exuberance of an unknown Canadian lady, became absorbed in the financial possibilities of some caves near Ottawa.

He withdrew the remaining capital from the bank, and sailed for Canada, providing grounds for divorce *en route*.

With my father's going, the break up of our home life was complete. My mother had not sufficient money to finish my education; the fact that I stayed on at Pangbourne till I was seventeen was due to the generosity of relations.

When I left school in the Christmas term of 1937 I had nothing to offer the world but an ability to play rugby and cricket very well, and some regret that I had not taken the navy examination more seriously.

Then I remembered having read that the Royal Navy had won the long battle for control of its own aircraft and was soliciting applications for short service commissions in the Fleet Air Arm.

My mother was fiercely against the idea of my taking to the air, but she had always hoped that I would enter the navy. Joining the Fleet Air Arm appeared to be a neat compromise.

I wrote for an application form, named two sponsors and posted the document to the Admiralty within a matter of hours. A postcard came telling me that my application was being considered; then there was silence.

It was obvious that for the next few weeks I was to be stretched on the rack of bureaucratic delay. I had a great longing to go to France. Once more, relations came to my help, and in May, 1938, I found myself staying with a delightful family who owned a vineyard near Saumur, on the Loire. Not far from the house was the French Cavalry School with its famous *Cadre Noir* in which, through the kindness of the commandant, I was allowed to ride.

In the intervals between the *Cadre Noir* and my earnest attention to the table, I listened to the French talking of the war, of whose coming they had no more doubt than of the next day's sunrise. My hostess had a distaste amounting to revulsion for the Germans. Almost every evening after dinner, when the light was low on the blue-powdered grapes, she walked me round the vineyard discoursing on "les Boches."

"Do you know where the real battlefield will be?"

"No. Where?"

"I think it will be in your country. You will hold. You must hold." She drove her fist into her palm, looking away from me, as if talking to herself.

Towards the middle of August I had a telegram from my mother telling me that I was to report to the Admiralty for an interview and medical inspection in a week's time. I presented myself for their lordships' consideration.

I answered the traditional questions in the traditional way. The three or four admirals and captains eyed each

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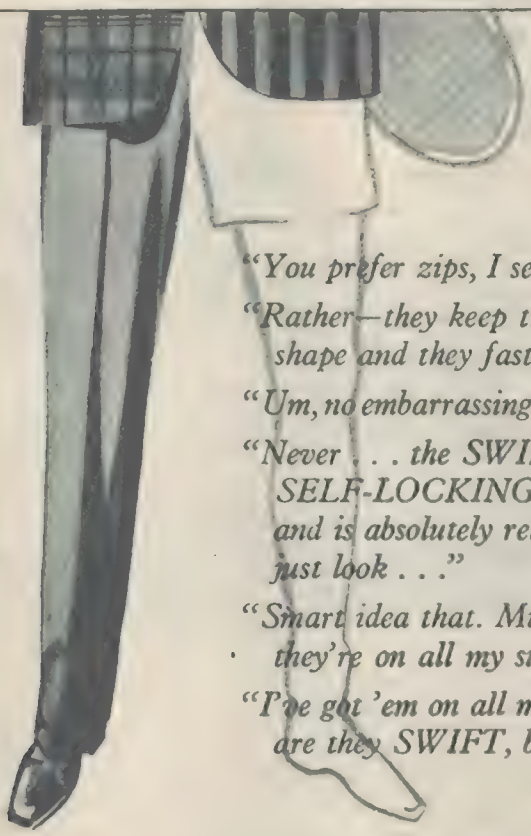

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other keenly when I said, cunningly, that I believed the air to be the master arm of any future war. This was not so smart as I thought, for I discovered afterwards that there was some hostility in the navy to the flying branch.

Back at Wookey Hole, the problem of what to do with myself arose once more. It might be several weeks before I knew the result of my interview, and money at home was shorter than ever.

I went to see an old friend of Father, the Town Clerk of Weston-super-Mare. He told me that work was beginning on the clearance of land to make way for a new road in Weston-super-Mare. The work would be hard: felling trees and cutting undergrowth. The pay would be small: £2 12s. 8d. a week after insurance had been deducted.

This was just the sort of thing I needed, and I accepted at once. In the first week of September, having found myself lodgings in London Road, Weston, I began to work as a navvy. After a little instruction from the foreman I soon got the hang of what I had to do, although felling a tree was not the simple operation I had thought.

With twenty-five of my fifty-two shillings going to the landlady, my ability to paint Weston red was limited. Fish and chips, as much beer as my money allowed, and an occasional cinema were the limits of what I could manage, or wanted.

I trained carefully, for an English rugby cap was still my target. The fact that I was well known in the district as the son of my father lent a certain brassy spice to my mode of living. I felt that I was getting my own back on Father, pushing to its limits a freedom he had never allowed.

Working as a navvy or swaggering round the Weston pubs was well enough, but I wanted something sensational which went beyond local gossip; I wanted to get my name into the

A Time to Compare

by JON WYNNE-TYSON

See how a child decides
Values and verities,
Scorning pretentiousness, prides
And asperities;
Heedless of motive;
Implicit; so sure
Of the good, of the true;
Unaware of the lure
Of those lusts and felicities
Real to the heart
Disenthralled of simplicities . . .

Could *we* but combine, in some
workable plan,
The wisdom of children, the
knowledge of man!

county papers. The Tor Fair at Glastonbury gave me an opportunity. There was a boxing booth.

The idea of stepping up with a professional bruiser in public offered at one blow the prospect of excitement and a promise of notoriety. Egged on by my friends at Weston, I went to see the booth master on the afternoon before the fair opened.

"Let's see your hands," he said, when I had told him what I wanted. "Bit soft aren't they? But they're big. What's your weight, son?"

"Twelve stone seven. A bit over perhaps."

"That's heavy. You'll have to take Battling Jo Jo. He's the biggest man I've got. Nigger from the Gold Coast. Useful boy, too."

I had come too far to back down now, and I keenly regretted my loud talk in Weston. When he asked me my name, I funked it. Many of the people in the crowd would know who I was, but I suddenly felt shy of having my name bawled out in public.

"Jerry Fitzgerald."

He wrote it down. "O.K. son. Tomorrow night at eight-thirty. Six three-minute rounds. Two quid if you win. Ten bob if you go the distance."

The tent, when I saw it the next night at eight, was full almost to capacity. Many of the faces were familiar: hunting farmers from the Mendips, rugby-playing friends, and, of course, the navvy's contingent from Weston.

I changed in a noisome little canvas annexe, and when the time came climbed into the ring to the deafening witticisms of my supporters. Jo Jo, wearing green shorts, was already in his corner. Head sunk on his chest, he hardly glanced at me. What had I let myself in for? I didn't doubt my ability to put up a fair show with the ordinary run of booth boxers. But Jo Jo, relaxed and calm, padding his boots in resin, looked altogether too professional.

I WENT out with right hand high and chin tucked behind my left shoulder. Jo Jo came in at once. Towards the end of the round he suddenly straightened from the waist and crashed a counter to my head. A right cross followed, coming from nowhere. When the bell went I was covering up against the ropes in mild trouble.

"Mix it, son," said my seconds. "Go after him. You're doing fine."

I wondered if they were right.

After the second round I was a little blown but still full of fight. I guessed I was ahead on points. If only there could be three minutes to go instead of twelve.

The bell again. Jo Jo started full of steam, crouching low, with round arm flailing jabs and butting head. I pumped out my left, but most of my punches bounced off his skull. When the round ended I was groggy but still on my feet. The crowd was up and yelling, people were beating with their hands on the edge of the ring.

Jo Jo seemed slower and more cautious in round four. I had recovered well and, possessed with the monstrous idea that I could knock him out, went after him like fury. I boxed bookishly in the next round. The prospect of victory had cooled me down.

When the bell went for the last round I came out of my corner bristling. Jo Jo, too, was on his toes. He slapped aside my first lead and hooked me on the jaw; for a few seconds we stood up and traded punches desperately, *thump, thump, thump*, every blow counting. The last one from me sent his head back.

I followed up furiously and he sagged against the ropes. His knee or glove must have touched the canvas, for the referee waved me away. The crowd gave an animal roar. I was going to win.

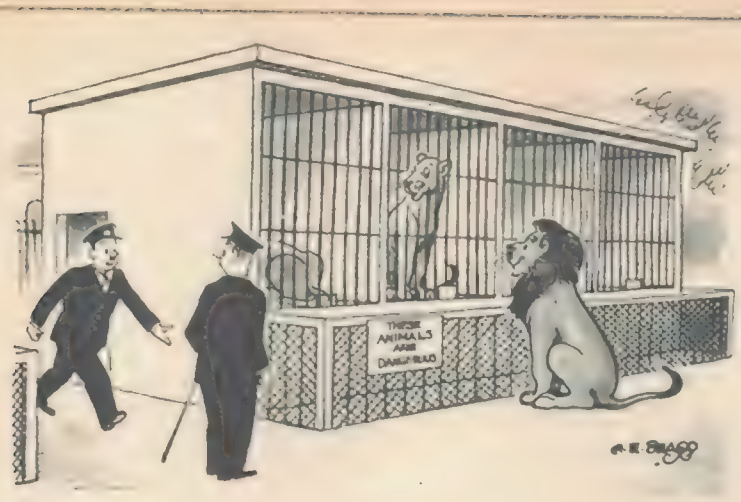
When the white figure between us slipped away I went in with guard down, gloves waving. Jo Jo rose on his toes and I hit him simultaneously with both fists. One blow cut an eyebrow and he must have seen me for what remained of the round through a red, aching haze.

I remember a final set-to: clashing elbows and flying gloves, and a punch which seemed to turn my stomach over. When the bell went we were both very tired, lolling on each other like a couple of drunks going home.

The referee held up my arm. I touched my glove above my head with a puffy grin. The boothmaster, with high ceremony, handed me not two but three pounds, adding sententiously that this was the first time anybody had beaten one of his men. I felt wonderfully elated. Nothing, I believed, would ever happen to me that could equal this moment. . . .

I waited nervously for a decision from the Admiralty. When the letter arrived it told me that I had been accepted for the Fleet Air Arm, that I would be required to join H.M.S. Frobisher at Portsmouth for sea training in the New Year, and that I should take steps to kit myself out with uniform. Just before New Year's Day I got myself a haircut, said goodbye to Mollie and went to Portsmouth to join my ship. Later our course was ordered to Scotland to join the aircraft carrier Courageous.

I left Portsmouth with regret. Life



"Well, it isn't one of ours"

as a midshipman had been more interesting and less exacting than I had feared. A few weeks at Portsmouth convinced me that I was a member of the finest fighting service in the world. It was a new service, without history or tradition, and the knowledge that we were to create both went to my head like wine. The fact that most orthodox sailors regarded us with suspicion merely added fuel to our arrogance. A similar effect came from the knowledge that none of us had yet flown an aircraft off a ship, or off the ground for that matter.

Our course went up to Scotland by train, arriving at Queensferry on a Sunday morning in grey weather: a grey town, grey heathery hills, grey water. I sniffed the air ruefully, remarking that all training places were set by some law of Nature in dreadful surroundings. Someone else made the necessary inquiries. All pubs were closed on Sundays and, when they were open, we in Courageous would have to walk four miles for a drink.

But the ship herself was a pleasant surprise. She was, of course, much bigger than Frobisher and living conditions were infinitely more civilized. To my disgust we were still expected to sling hammocks, but we had the gunroom to ourselves and messed, in some state, in the wardroom.

The Courageous was carrying out accelerator trials with a new type of catapult. While the ship went daily up and down the Forth launching aircraft, we cadets sat below listening to lectures on gunnery, navigation, signalling and other nautical subjects. It was frustrating to listen with one ear to an explanation of the Beaufort Scale while the other was filled with the exciting roar of deck-landings and take-offs.

There were breaks, however, when we could go up to watch the activities on the flight deck. What I saw filled me with curiously mixed emotions. I sometimes could and on other occasions absolutely failed to see myself in the cockpit of a Skua as it lurched off the deck or came swaying down on to it. With dismay I began to wonder if my element really was the air. Above all, I wondered if I could endure long flights over the sea.

After five weeks of lectures and instruction came the examinations. Surprisingly, I did best of all.

In the first days of April the carrier came south to pay off. We were to go on a fortnight's leave before reporting at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich for elementary flying instruction. During the paying-off ceremony the captain gave us a short talk. He thanked us pleasantly for the way we had behaved. He wished us luck and added that we might need it. At the end his tone became serious.

"Gentlemen," he said in substance. "I would like you all to be clear on one thing. This country will almost certainly go to war with Germany, probably in a few months. It will be a war of machines, and especially of flying machines. The Germans have a big air force and their strategy will be surprise. You must be ready for anything. I would remind you that in this ship at the moment we have a battery of six-inch high-angled guns permanently manned. The same thing is true of every operational unit in the fleet."

Well, there it was. Definite this time, almost official.

Greenwich I knew already, for I had been stationed there when sitting for the special examination for the navy a year before. Our flying instruction took place at Gravesend; we were taken there by bus every morning at eight, and generally at a speed rather faster than the Tiger Moths we were to fly later in the day. The weather held fine and we got the full quota of our time in the air.

I was lucky in my instructor. Spanton was a quiet, precise man in his middle thirties whose flying, as his job demanded, was discreet, firm and unfussy. But my phobia about the air returned with full force when I climbed for the first time into the rear cockpit of a Tiger Moth.

Before I knew it, we had climbed some fifty feet above the earth. The Moth climbed gently, banked one way, then the other, lost height, gained it.

Spanton whispered soberly down the inter-com. I saw Greenwich and the river, cloud shadows like bruise marks on the grey water; the satisfying symmetry of the college, the extraordinary amalgam of English fields, the hideous red-brick grid of housing estates.

Then we were dipping down to the aerodrome, the boundary slipped beneath, grass became tufted, full of flowers, and the Moth was down, running smoothly, shortly to a stop.

"What did you think of it?" asked Spanton.

This was the moment for shining eyes and a broad smile. Instead, I muttered that I thought it had been all right.

I went solo after seven and a half hours, the second of our batch to be offered the honour. I signed the Form 700, climbed in and did up the straps with a shaky hand. This was the queasy moment I had been longing for —or so I had thought.

"Good luck," said Spanton, "and see for my sake that you land the right side up."

All that I wanted to do was to get the damned thing over as quickly as possible. With this end in view I pulled the Moth off as soon as I could, banked over hard and climbed steeply to four hundred feet, making a circuit of the aerodrome as I went. This took about ten unpleasant minutes.

At what I judged to be the right

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time I turned tight into wind, cut the throttle and started my glide. But I was across wind, the aerodrome, most annoyingly, started to drift away to starboard. Irritably I jabbed the throttle open again, heaved the stick over and kicked on right rudder. Dead into wind now, but I was crossing the boundary much too high. Stick forward, then back.

Still too high, I floated on. Then the tail sank, the wheels touched. I was down, until I bounced into the air again. Down a second time, and once more into the air. Thus repeatedly, like a stone skidding in slow motion across water until all momentum finally ceased. This time I was really down. I would have liked to have jumped out to kiss the earth. I affected to taxi nonchalantly over to the hangar. Spanton was standing on the tarmac, pulling at his pipe.

"Well," he said, "at least you didn't go underground."

My first solo did nothing to reassure me. I didn't like the air and had no confidence in myself as a pilot.

I admitted my fear finally one evening, when I was walking by myself on Greenwich Stage. Flying was not for me. The problem was, how to leave it? I couldn't go back to my friends, to Spanton and the chief instructor and tell them that my bowels turned to water every time I climbed into a Tiger Moth. Were there even regulations to meet such contingencies? I was doubtful whether I couldn't be court-martialled.

When I reached the mess I read on the notice board that Spanton had booked me on the next day for a training session "under the hood."

At blind flying I had shown myself more stupid than most. I lost my wits completely the moment the spring-loaded canvas canopy was drawn over my head. My faculties were frozen in the fuzzy panic of claustrophobia.

My instructor had soon detected my distaste for instrument flying. On May 8, during a longer flight than usual, he took great pains with me. I didn't deserve his patience. I scarcely heard his orders and certainly failed to follow them. I kicked and pulled blindly, totally unable to co-ordinate stick and rudder. For all the sense I could make of the instruments I might have been upside down or spinning, up very high or only a few feet from the ground.

SPANTON was worried when we got down. "It won't do, old boy. We'll have to get this buttoned up. Get a bit rattled, don't you?"

He promised to fit in an extra session. It came on the afternoon of May 12, when it had just been announced that our next move was to Peterborough, where we were to fly an advanced type of trainer, the Miles Master. I felt extremely frightened, absolutely empty inside.

My instructor was already by the aircraft. I heaved myself in. The airscrew was swung and fluttered into life. Spanton told me to fasten the canopy. When I drew it over my head it was all my trembling fingers could do to adjust the clips. My seat straps, I noticed, were very loose.

"All aboard? O.K. I'll take her up to a thousand and hand her over."

It seemed a long climb. I sat stiff as a ramrod in the twilight, looking glumly at the dials. At a thousand feet exactly the mutter came into my headphones: "She's all yours."

Strangely, things went better for once. The desire to throw my hands from the stick and stand up was not so urgent. Finally, to my intense relief, Spanton said that we were turning for home. We must have been near the circuit, for the next minute he told me to throttle back and lose height.

I was actually feeling relaxed, although I could still see nothing. There were only five minutes more.

"Throttle back. Throttle back more. Hold her straight on two three zero. You're doing beautifully. Hold her straight. Hold her straight."

That was the last time I heard Spanton. I remember very distinctly seeing the needle slide down to five hundred feet. I remember, on my own initiative, easing the throttle back a little more. As that reading and that movement coincided a shivering blow struck the Moth on the port side. Solid light hit me between the eyes. I think I felt as if I was being cleft upwards. Then nothing. No more sound. Nothing.

We were knocked out of the sky at 4.20 p.m. Six hours earlier, in Wookey Hole, my mother had packed a suitcase and settled down to wait for the telegram which she knew would come.

Those are the facts, for what they are worth. I don't attempt to explain them.

Much later, I learned what had happened to cause the crash. I had been very unlucky. Another Moth, flown by an instructor whose pupil, like myself, was under the hood, came into the circuit at the same height and speed. Neither pilot saw the other.

In the collision our port wing and part of the tail plane were sheared away. I knew nothing of the five hundred feet we fell. What was left of the aircraft spiralled down to crash in a wood by the side of the main London-Rochester road. Spanton was killed instantly, while I had both legs trapped between the instrument panel and the rudder bar.

The other aircraft had made a partially controlled descent but had piled up on landing. The pupil had survived with nothing more than shock and abrasions.

The instructor was in Gravesend Hospital with a broken spine and fractured skull. And I was in the same hospital, lingering between life and death with my right leg gone and my left in jeopardy.

Thanks to Mollie, whose devotion gave me courage, I chose life. But a pointless life it seemed, until I chanced to read in a newspaper of Douglas Bader, a pilot with no legs, who was, nevertheless, flying in action against the enemy. If Bader, why not Hodgkinson?

My case, it is true, was vastly different from Bader's. He had been a regular officer in the R.A.F.; I had been a Fleet Air Arm midshipman under training. He had done some hundreds of hours in various operational types of aircraft; I had done precisely fourteen and a half in a Tiger Moth. He knew men in the service who could help him; I knew nobody. It seemed as if he loved the air; I hated it. None of these disadvantages would have mattered to me at the time. If Bader could fly, I told myself, so could Hodgkinson.

I passed the rest of that Sunday in this state of feverish exaltation. On the Monday I asked to see the orthopaedic surgeon, Surgeon-Commander Oldham. I questioned him about my left leg. Oldham repeated what I had been told for the last six months: it might one day be sound, but there would always be the danger of it breaking down.

"Then you can't guarantee it?"

"No, I can't, old boy," he answered, hedging. "But I can't guarantee, either, that it will always give you trouble."

I asked to see the surgeon-captain in charge. Surgeon-Captain Briggs was a stooping quiet man, with ascetic face, gentle hands and a pleasantly unhearty bedside manner. He saw me that day.

I told him of my anxiety to be up and about again, without mentioning the fact that I had resolved to get back to flying. I took the bull by the horns. If there was to be persistent doubt about the leg, would it not be better to have it amputated?

NEXT WEEK: I join a fighter squadron—on two tin legs

"Best Foot Forward" by Colin Hodgkinson is published as a book by Odhams, price 18s.

STRANGE TALES OF THE SEA • 15

by Commander Douglas Duff

The pride of Hitler's navy vanished

WITH all canvas set on her spiring masts, the steel barque Admiral Karpfanger was the Queen of the Seas, the pride of Hitler's merchant navy. She had been specially built to give German cadets their training in real seamanship.

Her auxiliary motors, the finest available, could give her a speed of sixteen knots when needed. Her radio and her navigational aids were the best in the world. Germany's most capable and experienced officers sailed in her, and many of her seamen were veterans brought up in windjammers.

She sailed from Australia at the beginning of March, 1938, homeward bound for Germany round Cape Horn. Already, the threat of war was making it advisable that so great an asset of the Third Reich should be safe in a German port.

On March 12 she made her routine radio report. All was well aboard and she was making good speed easterly for Cape Horn.

From that moment nothing has ever been heard of the great sailing ship, or of the hundreds of men and cadets she carried. Ship and crew vanished completely. Not so much as a floating boat-strake or a lifebuoy bearing her name was ever found.

Ever since then men have argued about what happened to her, for so staunch and well-equipped a vessel would not have been overwhelmed so suddenly that her radio could not have sent out a distress signal.

Some say that she was never meant to win home—that there were people aboard her whom the Nazi rulers wished to be rid of.

Maybe—for it was only eighteen months before the outbreak of war—she steered south, to lay fuel and stores for U-boats and the surface-raiders which, later, were to wreak so much havoc. Perhaps she was wrecked while she did so and no one dared send an SOS to summon aid and so betray the Fuehrer's plot.

That she could have been deliberately scuttled appears unlikely, because no survivor has ever appeared.

Loneliest island in the world

Continued from page 23

under the direction of the chaplain, and several of our party were enrolled as assistant teachers. Lessons now took place in a vacant room at the station. The older youths were eager to take advantage of the school and turned up punctually with their newly issued pencils and writing-books.

Even Ken Rogers and his brothers, some of whom were married, Wilson Glass, and other relatively educated young men came voluntarily to add to their knowledge. A few of the girls, notably Ken's sisters, Asturias and Marie, shared this desire, but most of the girls were content with illiteracy.

The biggest obstacle was that the English they were being taught to read and write was so different from the language that they spoke. To correct local grammar would have been as difficult as it would have been pointless. Some of the oddities gave added vigour to the speech. Double and triple negatives were used to pile up emphasis. Stranger to us was a curious kind of double positive:

"Sometimes he allus go fishin'."

"Look at those boys firing (throwing) pebbles. That they allus do somes times."

In their everyday speech the islanders used many nautical words. The men were always "hands." String was invariably "line" and was measured in fathoms. The words left and right were redundant on Tristan. The points of the compass were always in mind and the islanders spoke naturally of the north or south of a room or table.

Sometimes in the evenings at David Hagan's house I would help Emily with her "larnin'." Reading could hold her entranced for an hour on end—which was a long time for Emily. It was a new and satisfying experience. Simple stories of which an English child has exhausted the charm at five years old could enthral her at eighteen. "Cinderella" held its glamour after several readings.

The main annual event was the potato harvest, when the men spent the whole day at the potato patches. Even the women laid aside their knitting to join in the great task of lifting the potatoes. About midday they could be seen going along the road to the patches, some riding donkeys, on which they perched side-saddle with babies in their arms. Tins of baked potatoes and pots of tea were slung across the animals' necks. A long train of children and dogs walked behind.

The patches were a plain, about half a mile wide and a mile long, lying between the mountain and the sea. Here the island men cultivated their potatoes in small patches or fields, each of which was private property and marked out as such by a low wall of stones. About property rights the islanders were almost fierce; and a family that neglected to till and tend its patches would be allowed to starve in consequence or made to pay a high price in material possessions for the potatoes it needed from its neighbours. The crop was never a really good one, since the men never changed the seed and rarely changed the ground.

As soon as the women arrived there, they would prepare a midday meal—most of the men having had no breakfast—and then remain for the rest of the day to help with the gathering of the potatoes that had been dug. The light was fading before the family processions began to make their way, like caravans of tired pilgrims, back along the road to the village.

Where there was only one donkey to a family, it was ridden by the man, sitting well back in a clumsy saddle made of wood, straw and canvas, his long legs dangling on either side, his feet in the dust, so that sometimes he appeared to be walking. Strung out behind were the women and children, carrying tools and utensils and accompanied by the inevitable train of dogs.

While we were on the island the village council reported that the year's crop had been about 4,500 bushels.

But before the summer ended there

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Your Garden and Mine

by PERCY THROWER

WHEN planting cuttings, I get much greater success if I first put them in river sand. I make a shallow imprint in a small mound of the sand with an ordinary building brick. After trimming the cuttings and dipping them in hormone-rooting powder, I lay them flat on the sand with just a short piece inside the imprint. I then replace the brick.

In a few weeks the cuttings are growing up the sides of the brick and, although they each have a basal bend, the roots are well established. One such bed will take up to twenty cuttings, and the brick holds them firm until they are transplanted. — A. D. ABBOTT, Stoney Royd, Farsley, near Leeds.

I always sprinkle a few extra seeds around my white alyssum when bedding out. By the time the original plants have ceased to flower the new ones are almost ready to bloom, and I am thus able to get a good show for many more months.—A. ROSE, Pengwern Street, Liverpool, 8.

PERCY THROWER says: In using river sand, Mr. Abbott has a good rooting medium, and with the porous brick he gets a limited condensation on the underside from rising moisture. Should the cuttings get too dry, don't drown them by using a watering can. Moisten slightly by just filling the indent of the brick.

Many of the edging plants such as alyssum begin to look a bit drab by August, and Mr. Rose's tip will extend the flowering period. It can also be used for the Livingstone daisy, nemesia and night-scented stock. Don't sow too many seeds and spoil the original plants by overcrowding.

JOHN BULL pays five guineas each for the best original, topical gardening hints sent to Percy Thrower, JOHN BULL, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. No entry can be returned unless a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

was to be another and very different harvest. Once a year, in March, there was a kind of holiday outing for the people of Tristan: this was the trip to Sandy Point, on the south-eastern side of the island, to pick the apples in the orchards there. It was the only regular occasion on which the women and girls accompanied the men in the boats. This year, they were accompanied, too, by most of the naval party.

The journey was about twelve miles by sea. I occupied my now customary place in the Wild Rose. Robert Lavarello was again at the tiller and David Hagan pulling the bow oar. Emily crouched in the stern-sheets among a cluster of other girls with men's coats thrown over their heads and shoulders to shield them from the spray. The whole party was in a holiday mood.

Just before we reached Sandy Point, Willy Repetto, the island chief, called a halt and, at a place known as Big Gulch, where the narrow black beach opened out into a great gash in the mountainside, all the women and girls were set ashore. They had not far to travel. The boats were pulled slowly ahead and the women scrambled over the rocks, some carrying children.

It was at that moment that we heard a deep, growling rumble from the mountain and looked up to see massive boulders bounding down the slope directly above the women. The oarsmen stopped pulling, all the men stood up in the boats and began shouting conflicting advice: "Run back!" "Run forward!"

Their panic was oddly like excitement, as if they were urging on contestants in a race. For what seemed an interminable pause the women crouched still in fear and uncertainty.

At last, they stumbled back on their tracks just as the boulders thundered to the beach; only a little dog which had run barking all the way from the settlement was killed. The men resumed their rowing again.

Immediately the boats grounded on the pebbles at Sandy Point, the men leaped out and ran back along the beach to meet the women and children —not to express their concern, but to congratulate them on dodging the rocks.

AFTER lunch, when the excitement had subsided, Chief led the way by a steep path that zig-zagged up the cliff face to a low plateau, about a hundred and fifty feet above the sea. Here lay the "orchards"—a jungle of low, spreading trees, almost unrecognizable as apple trees.

Among the trees it was impossible for the group to remain intact. Each person took a small box, bag or other receptacle and struck out on his own into the jungle. At rare intervals, moving from tree to tree, one met little family groups of harvesters.

Carrying my half-filled box from one part of the jungle to another, I came upon Emily Hagan, the skirt of her outer dress held out in front of her and overflowing with apples, for which she was in search of a receptacle. I set the box down before her; but she released the apples too quickly from her dress, so that more tumbled in the grass than into the box. She stood idly by while, on my knees, I set about retrieving them.

As I rose from arranging the last of the spilled apples at the top of the box, her hands darted among the leaves above her and she asked: "Is you wan' a happle to eat? This one is sweet."

I took the hand which held the apple. She accepted the action placidly, with no attempt to draw back. Emily's lips were sweeter than the ripest apple. . . .

I promised myself that before I left Tristan I would visit every home in the village and know every family. One fact I learned from these visits was the marked difference between the best homes and the poorest. Some of the cottages, the oldest ones, were of well-trimmed stones, complete with lofts and lined throughout with wood. These had been built when the skill in stonemasonry of the first settlers and good supplies of driftwood and timber from wrecked sailing ships were available.

Later ones—built since wrecks had become few and driftwood scarce—had no lofts and very little woodwork. Some cottages had bare earthen floors; the walls were unpanelled or only half-panelled with packing-case wood. In most, however, there had been some attempt at making the interior homelike: shelves and mantelpieces were lined with paper cut into ornamental shapes; and bare stone walls were pasted over with old newspaper—of which the islanders always spoke grandly as "wallpaper."

Some families were very poor—that is, they possessed few cattle, sheep or oxen, sometimes none. In one or two instances this poverty was due to laziness and improvidence. In these homes the children had to be fed almost entirely on fish: they were pale, thin and undersized beside the other children.

In such a small, self-contained society we might have expected some system of communal sharing and assistance. There was no such practice; and Mrs. Repetto, the headwoman, whose influence in all matters of village policy was preponderant, hotly denounced any tendency of this kind. She declared that it only encouraged greater laziness among the already idle.

If neighbourly feeling was lacking, however, public opinion certainly was not. Gossip was rife: it was the chief activity of the women; but so pervasive was the desire for respectability that scandal rarely had a chance.

Tristan society was by no means the single unit that we had at first assumed it to be. The villagers were definitely class-conscious; certain families were considered superior to others. There was one snobbery that was pronounced. The islanders were sensitive about the coloured stock that had been included among the original settlers, and they viewed with distaste any surviving evidence of this strain. Consequently, those born with fair hair and blue eyes looked down on those with dark hair and brown eyes, and regarded with contempt certain people whose skin showed a definite swarthiness.

On the whole, there was a disappointing lack of local lore among the villagers. There were very few home cures for illness and no home-made poetry or legends. There were some indigenous customs—such as those connected with birthdays. In every person's history three birthdays had special significance. They were the first, the twenty-first and the fortieth—these being considered the important stepping-stones in life.

Dances and parties were held on these occasions, with special feasts of beef or mutton. Each guest, on arriving, greeted the holder of the birthday with a kiss and a slap—a kiss for love and a slap for the hard knocks of life. The normal practice of giving presents was reversed: it was the person celebrating the birthday who was expected to provide a present for every visitor. These gifts varied from a specially knitted garment to a pot of potatoes or a freshly caught crayfish.

In the last week of March, hands were called by Chief to man all eight island boats for a trip to Nightingale to collect petrel fat for use in cooking and in the little lamps that would light the cottages during the winter.

The trip was to be a short one, lasting two or three days. A week later, the boats had not returned. The sea was running heavier than it had since before Christmas.

I visited the home of Widow Charlotte with some clothes to be washed. She was sitting on a low stone abutment at the eastern end of her cottage. Near her home a stream gurgled.

Just then, from next door, came two neighbours, Agnes and her daughter Marie. They carried armfuls of clothes for washing in the stream. The greeting which Agnes called out did not seem as cheerful as usual and Marie, though her smile was as blithe as ever, did not sing as she banged the wet garments on a boulder to loosen the dirt. There seemed to be a tension in the air of the whole village.

After a couple of minutes, Charlotte called out in her blunt way: "Haggie! When you think they be back? You know what Mis' Repetto say?"

"What Mis' Repetto say?"

"She say it like when she was a little gal, all the men go out for chase a ship, an' didn't never come back."

"What you wanna say 'at fa', Shawlutt? Is you wanna skeer folks?"

I sensed the horror of isolation that must have engulfed those wives of the early settlers—severed at that time completely from the rest of the world—when their men were lost. The memory of that disaster, handed down through the recitals of Old Sam Swain and Mrs. Repetto, still haunted the imaginations of the women.

Eight days now, and the boats had not returned. And then, at night, came a shout of "Sail Ho!"

Lights appeared in the village. Cottage doors opened. In the house where I sat, the click of Emily's knitting-needles was stilled, and the room seemed to hold its breath in a silence.

The girl's mother sprang up with the first show of animation I had seen in her and cried: "The boats iss back."

Emily's knitting was flung aside as she jumped from her seat on the bed. Wood was thrown on the almost dead embers of the fire, water splashed into a large pot in readiness at the hearthside. The two little boys asleep on the couch stirred among their dark blankets and, amid the general clatter, Pier's sleepy-thin voice was heard asking: "What is it, Momma?"

"It's you' poppa! The boats iss back."

Soon torches were bobbing down the road towards the beach. I set off warily in the same direction. Then panic broke out. The voice of one of the early arrivals cried that there was "bare one boat." Women ran stumblingly down the steep bank and across the shingle. Emily's mother went slithering past me on the pebbles, spilling half the tea from her pot, mumbling "David! David!"

Then the foremost torches lit up grinning faces of men clustered above the boat, and Arthur Repetto's great laugh was heard above the surf and the rattle of dislodged pebbles.

Only one boat had returned. But the others were still safe at Nightingale.

On the next day the wind dropped, the sun shone, and the other boats sailed home in sedate formation. Before sundown, the men were sipping their tea on the beach and the boys were stringing cans of petrel fat across the backs of their donkeys. The party had brought home well over two hundred gallons of fat from Nightingale. . . .

It was disconcerting to have to do one's love-making in the presence of the family, and of Wilson Glass, Emily's persistent but unsuccessful suitor. For months he had been coming to the house in the evenings and for hours sitting in a changeless attitude on the long, wooden sofa, so that it had come to be known as Wilson's sofa. The first time that I had entered the room and found Wilson sitting there, with his long, stocking-clad legs outthrust as if to impede my passage, I was nonplussed. But since neither the girl nor her family seemed to pay any attention at all to his presence, I soon learned to disregard it.

At sundown, David returned from fishing. As soon as the dinghy was seen to be making for the shore, the elder boy, Donald, would rush away to the beach to help his father bring home the catch. Together they would reenter the house, Donald dragging a bag, from which he would tip out on to the floor a dozen live crayfish. Excitedly Donald would snatch them up one at a time by the foreleg and pop them into a large pot of water that stood in readiness on the fire.

IT was accepted as only proper that I should have the seat of honour on the tousled bed, where I was always afraid of sitting on the sleeping children, and that Emily should sit beside me, where I might place a discreet arm around her waist as I questioned David politely about his fishing or the potato harvest. Only Wilson's outstretched legs crossed and recrossed themselves uneasily.

Conversation with Emily was largely a programme of teasing and being teased. Her only range of interest was in gossip about the other personnel at the station and trifling scandal about the other girls of the village. About the past or the future or about the world beyond Tristan she had no curiosity. The only attention she ever paid to Wilson was to turn on him with pretended amazement at his presence and inquire maliciously. "What you iss sitting 'yah for, Wilson? Iss you trying to wear out the seat of you' trousers?"

Wilson acknowledged with a sheepish smile his gratitude for this much notice.

When Emily felt tired, she went to sleep. Regularly, before the evening was old, her dark, curly head would fall against my shoulder and rest there in a benumbing position. Then David felt called on to pick up the slender skein of conversation that his daughter had dropped. Sometimes he would ask

about the outer world. "What sort of beach is you-all got in England? Is it as big as Big Beach?" I answered that we had a great number of beaches, some of them miles long. He smiled with polite incredulity. He was curious about snow.

When I rose to say "Good night," the girl slipped without waking from my shoulder to a recumbent position on the bed, where she would remain until the morning. She never knew at what time I left the house. From his place on the sofa Wilson did not stir. For all I knew, he might spend the whole night there in silent vigil, while David gazed into the embers of the fire. . . .

Gordon Glass and several other hands were to take one of the big boats round to Stony Beach on the southern coast of the island. They were going to kill a young steer from the herd of wild cattle kept there, for the twenty-first birthday party of Gordon's son, Clement.

We assembled at six-thirty in the morning outside Gordon's house and by seven o'clock we had put out from Little Beach in the Trader. Stony Beach lay four miles beyond Sandy Point, where the apple harvest had been gathered.

Shouldering guns, our party began to make its way up through the long, coarse grass to the rocky ground above. At length we came to a pocket of level ground, with the mountainside sheer above us and a group of low and curiously conical hills shutting out sight and sound of the sea on the other side. Directly ahead of us the ground rose to a sharp ridge. The islanders approached it warily, and I gathered that the cattle were near. We climbed the slope to the ridge and lay flat just below the crest. Then I peeped over and gasped with surprise.

Immediately below us, the land fell away steeply to a wide plain that must have been one of the largest tracts of level ground on the island. Over this plain were scattered cattle, a great herd, larger than I had expected. The bulls were standing on the outskirts and the whole herd had an air of alertness. The islanders were peering through the grass, lying flat on their stomachs, examining the cattle. In jest, I asked Clement: "Well, have you spotted the one we're after?"

With calm seriousness he replied: "That young black one with the white nose, way obber the far soyde." The nearest animal was about half a mile away.

Quickly and quietly, Godfrey Glass led the way down the steep slope to the plain, where the cattle were beginning to mill, the bulls on the outside, the cows and calves in the centre. Then the black leader broke the mill-wheel and headed the herd away in a lumbering stampede towards the far side of the plain. The men followed at an unhurried lope over the uneven ground, trying to keep their eyes on the young steer that was their target. Our black opponent changed his tactics, bearing down straight upon us at the head of a thundering charge.

Then there was a frantic scramble and flounder to get out of their path as the cattle thudded past, spittle flying from their mouths.

The islanders cheered and shouted, and two Glass brothers roared with laughter as lumbering George Glass lost his footing and rolled himself furiously over and over to get clear of the pounding hooves.

For an hour men chased cattle and cattle chased men from one end of the plain to the other. Only three shots were heard, and it was the third which brought down the young steer. The rest of the herd rumbled away to the other end of the level ground, where they formed a long and motionless rank, as they watched the little group of men skin the fallen beast and cut the meat into portions small enough to carry back to the boat.

REGULARLY I paid visits to the home of Bob Glass. During the long evenings old Bob revealed more and more astonishing facts about his life in many parts of the world. At the age of eighteen he had left the island and gone to South Africa. There he had worked at a candle factory in Cape Town.

Old Bob had left this to join the whaling schooner Swallow, of which his uncle was skipper. From him he had gained his "edication." He had made two trips, the first as "boatsteerer," the second as third mate. Later he had joined an American barque, the Wild Rose, on a sealing expedition to Gough Island. He had been to England and several times to America. He had returned to the Cape and had been working there at the time of what he inveterately called the "Bluebonnet" plague—as if it had been a particular vexing epidemic in feminine fashions.

During the Boer War he had served as one of Kitchener's scouts. Afterwards he had tried diamond-mining and farming in the Orange Free State, but had given them up to return at the age of thirty-four to Tristan, bringing with him his Irish wife, Elizabeth, and five children. After three years on Tristan and the birth of her eighth child, Elizabeth had died and Bob had married the island-born Charlotte—a daughter of old Sam Swain.

He had never again left the island; and yet there had been disillusion in his staying there. His talk was always of the "houtside warl'," especially of the South Africa of his fighting days. He said once: "Some folks don't loik wars. But when Oi was fighting the Boers, 'at was the happiest toime of my loife."

When asked if he would like to leave the island again, he replied, gently, honestly, but with a resigned smile. "Yaas, but it's too late now. I'se got too howld to go."

During the week of his seventieth birthday Bob Glass died. On the day of his funeral his coffin was carried all around the settlement by a little cortège of villagers and finally buried in the little cemetery where, not very long before, he had pointed out to us his "granddad's" grave and retold for the last time the pranks of his boyhood.

Children playing near the graveyard pointed to a new turf-mound and some even called it "Granddad's"; but there was no headstone from which to prise the leaded letter for pellets—not even a little wooden cross to steal and use as a sword.

THE END

D. M. Booy's book will be published by Dent under the title "Rock of Exile" on May 30, at 25s.

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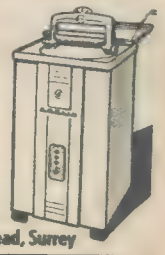

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The Golden Lantern

Continued from page 8

Languish Island," the golden-haired Malin said casually. "And I saw Flirtation heading that way this afternoon."

I wondered who Ollett was, and if Flirtation was Chalmers's boat, and why he had gone to Languish Island, wherever that might be, when he had an urgent appointment with me at eight o'clock.

"He may be home when we get there," Vanessa said. "You must come up, Mark. I must say country life seems to have suited you. I thought you'd have drifted into premature middle age before now."

I laughed, but I felt uneasy. I didn't know what I was going to do if Warren Chalmers didn't turn up. Also, I had the idea that Vanessa's three companions weren't nearly so vague as they had pretended to be about where he was. Again, there was something contrived about the way they had shown up.

There was the girl, too. She was watching again through the mirror. I listened to the others. Malin and Reardon were talking about themselves—the sort of talk I often get from a client who wants me to know certain things that conceal more important ones.

Malin had been foreign correspondent for a London news agency in various parts of the world. For some years since the war he'd lived in Canada. His wife was half-English, half-French. More recently they'd had a flat in Maida Vale, but a year ago they gave that up, and since then they had occupied more or less permanent quarters at The Golden Lantern. Reardon had rooms there, too.

I ASKED what Melhaven's attractions were. It seemed a pleasant enough town, but not the sort of place an active man would choose to live in.

"Yachting enthusiasts gravitate here," Reardon said. His accent was thick—American tinged with something I couldn't place. "I've a two-hundred-tonner lying in the Roads, and that qualifies me to reside here when I choose—which is quite often. I have business interests in this country."

He also told me that he had an apartment in New York and used the yacht to take him periodically from there to Florida and Bermuda, where he owned hotels. It seemed I was moving in elevated company.

By now I had almost given up hope of Warren Chalmers keeping his appointment. Just before ten Vanessa said we would all go round home, on the chance that he would be there.

We went out to a huge car—Reardon's—and in less than ten minutes we had reached Chanter's Wharf and The Golden Lantern. The wharf apparently marked the edge of the town. Beyond it the estuary widened towards the open sea.

We followed Vanessa up well-kept terrace steps to a private door, which led into a spacious hall and thence into a big room with french windows. She asked if I would care for another drink while she looked for Warren. I said no. I'd had more than enough. Reardon pulled a chair towards the fire, and Malin began to fiddle with the radio. His wife picked up a magazine.

Vanessa soon came back. Warren, she said, wasn't anywhere about. "If he comes in later, I'll tell him you're here and he can give you a ring."

He could do that, I agreed. There was something I didn't understand. They didn't know that Warren had sent for me. Then why should they imagine that I cared a straw whether I saw him or not?

I said good night to the others. Vanessa told me as we went towards the outer door that she would run me back to town.

"I'd rather walk," I said.

"Just as you like."

Neither of us spoke for a minute or so. Six years is a long time.

"Well?" she said at last. "Why don't you say it?"

"I can't think of anything to say."

"Neither can I," she said. "It's

so strange isn't it? I suppose I should feel guilty."

"I don't see why. Not after so long."

I caught a faint drift of her perfume. It took me back to a time when we hadn't stood apart like two strangers. "I suppose everything's all right with you?" I asked.

"Naturally. Why shouldn't it be? Everything's fine, Mark. I'm terribly happy. That's the conventional thing to say, isn't it?"

"I believe it is."

"You seem to have survived, too. I'm quite glad about that." She touched my arm.

I left her at the gate and walked slowly back along the waterfront, my emotions playing tricks with me and all kinds of doubts gnawing at my mind. After a while I sat down on a bollard to get my thoughts straightened out.

Suddenly I realized I wasn't alone on the quay. The girl in the sweater and blue jeans was there, too, sitting on the edge with her feet dangling towards the water. I had the idea that she had been watching me all the time I was sitting there—and she had watched me in the pub, too. It seemed curious. . . . I crossed and said good evening.

There was enough light to see the way her eyes travelled over me again. "You're the man I saw in the Dolphin, aren't you?"

"I'm on my way back there now," I told her.

"You can't get past the boat-yard when the tide's coming in. You'll have to turn up Brandy Staithe. It's dark that way, and you'll find a whole fleet of lorries parked without lights. Better be careful."

"Thanks," I said. "I will. Are you staying at the Dolphin?"

"Me? Good heavens, I don't have that sort of income. No, I live down there." She twirled a small foot and I noticed the dark shape of a boat below.

"You eat, sleep and cook in that?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"I don't know much about boats."

"You don't have to, for pottering about the creeks. My brother bought the hull five years ago and spent all his spare cash fitting her out."

I nodded. "So you're here with your brother?"

"Not exactly. He—well, he lost interest, so I took her over." She lit a cigarette, turning away her face. "Wasn't it Van Chalmers you were talking to?"

I nodded. "I've just come from Chanter's Wharf now."

She drew hard on the cigarette. "I guessed you were going that way when I saw you leave the Dolphin. They often come in."

"Does Warren Chalmers come with them? He wasn't there tonight."

"Sometimes. You wouldn't see much of the other hotel. That's a pity. It's rather wonderful."

"I had that impression even in the dark."

"Did you notice the basin?" She still wasn't looking at me.

"I don't know what the basin is."

"It's the end of the Thames-Melhaven Canal. It's not used now. The canal, I mean.

"The Golden Lantern is so called because there used to be a light just beyond it to show the end of the deep-water channel. The canal basin's part of the hotel grounds now—fenced off, of course. There are locks at the top of the basin and at the bottom." She sighed. "Some people are lucky. All Warren Chalmers has to do is run Flirtation into the basin at high water, shut the gates, and she floats there even when the Mel's a million acres of mud. He builds boats there, too."

That was news. "One of his many

CONSCIENCE—3

A man has less conscience when in love than in any other condition.

Schopenhauer

commercial activities, or just a hobby?"

"Hobby, I suppose. . . . Ollett looks after all that for him now."

It was the second time I had heard Ollett's name within an hour. But I didn't ask who he was.

She gave a little chuckle. "I wonder why Warren Chalmers didn't take Flirtation into the basin tonight?"

"Should he have done? And didn't he?"

She pointed. In mid-stream I could see the dark outline of a biggish boat, its lights showing yellow across the water.

"You mean that's his boat?" I asked sharply. "How long has she been there?"

"Seven o'clock or half-past. I saw her coming in."

This was something I didn't understand at all. "You're quite sure of that? He dropped anchor or whatever you call it, and came ashore?"

"I can't tell you that. Maybe he did, or maybe he's still there. Someone is, because she's lit up."

"His wife was expecting him home," I said.

"He may have someone aboard he wouldn't like his wife to meet."

Farther along the quay someone was cooking supper. It reminded me that I had eaten nothing since early afternoon. I asked the girl if there was any place open in town, or if I would be able to get a meal at the hotel.

"You'll get nothing in Melhaven after nine o'clock," she said, "and the Dolphin's doubtful as late as this. You can come down and have a snack with me if you like." She got up. "It's a crazy old ladder. Be careful."

It *was* crazy, and I was grateful to feel the deck under my feet. I followed her into the cabin and she lit an oil-lamp there. The galley, at the after end, was about four feet square.

She said: "What do you want for supper? Could you open a can of beans while I cook sausages?"

Ten minutes later we were sitting in the cabin with supper between us on the folding table. As she poured coffee, strong and black, she said: "How long have you known Van Chalmers? Don't tell me if you'd rather not."

"There's no reason why I shouldn't. Since she was a child. As a woman, about nine years."

"Soon after the war. . . . What was she like then? What did she do?"

"Her father was a doctor in the town where I live." I added, surprising myself by the admission: "I was going to marry her, but then she met Chalmers."

"Lucky for you," she said with youthful candour. "Are you a doctor, too?"

"I'm a lawyer," I said, "and to spare you the trouble of further questioning, I'm comparatively poor, unmarried, and my name's Mark Cradford."

"Mine's Elva Peterson." She looked thoughtfully at the beans still left in the dish, and divided them. "It wasn't idle curiosity that prompted those questions. I saw you come into the bar, Mr. Cradford. I don't think you came there for fun."

She hesitated. "I don't know why you came to Melhaven, but I do know that, ten minutes after you came into the Dolphin, somebody was advised by telephone—and again when you booked a room; and that you were followed back."

"Followed?" I said incredulously.

"Someone was stalking you when you came along the quay. That's why I positively invited you to say hallo and then asked you to supper. I didn't want to hear tomorrow morning that you'd been found face-down in the harbour mud."

"But why should anyone follow me?"

She shrugged and said: "You can stay here till daylight, if you like." She added quickly: "You may think it's fantastic, Mr. Cradford, but queer things happen in this town to people certain other people dislike. Take the risk and go back to the Dolphin—or stay. It's up to you."

I looked at her. She was very young. I suddenly didn't feel I should take her too seriously.

"Sorry," I said, "but I'm going back. I've a room waiting at the hotel and I'm going to use it."

Her eyes were half-closed, her lovely mouth serious. "So you don't believe what I told you?" She opened a locker. "Then you'd better take this."

I hadn't expected to see a gun in her slim hand. It was no weak woman's gun either, but a brute, ugly as sin.

She said: "It's my brother's. You can bring it back tomorrow."

I hadn't handled a gun for a long time. It made me wonder where her brother had got it and what sort of fellow he was.

"I shouldn't take it," I told her doubtfully. "But it's probably safer in my possession than yours. And now—would you like to tell me what this is all about?"

She smiled. "Would you like to tell me why you came here tonight?"

I shook my head and put the gun in my pocket. I said: "You're a

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funny girl. Just now I'd say you're one of the funniest I've ever met."

"I wouldn't worry too much about that. Take care of yourself. Especially in Brandy Staithe."

I left her then, and climbed up the ladder to the wharf. I noticed the name Swallow painted on the boat's bows.

I set off along the wharf. I soon came to the boat-yard Elva had mentioned. Brandy Staithe, presumably, was the opening on my right.

I didn't like the look of Brandy Staithe. It was broad enough where it opened on to the quay, but narrowed to an arched bottleneck nearer the street. The lorries Elva had warned me against were parked on either side of me, and I had the uncomfortable feeling that someone lurking between them might spring out at any moment.

But I passed along in safety. Ahead of me in the main street I could hear a car, coming along fast with a roar of exhaust. There was a sudden blinding flash of light as it turned into the lane, momentarily lost speed, dropped into low gear, and then leaped forward again.

I was just past the parked lorries, close to the wall on my left. The car had plenty of room to pass even in that narrow place, but instinctively I realized that it wasn't going to pass. It was heading straight for me.

By all the rules I should have stayed where I was and died, but some reflex action wakened my muscles so that I turned and ran back, dodging behind the first of the lorries. It was such a near thing that the off-side wing of the car caught my sleeve.

That reflex action didn't stop there. Without conscious thought, I pulled out the gun. By that time the car was slowing down to take the corner and I sent three bullets after it.

My game leg was hurting badly. I ran like a crab up Brandy Staithe, across the main street, and into a narrow passage between two shops on the other side. I hadn't been there more than thirty seconds before a policeman came running along the street. He went past Brandy Staithe, thought better of it, turned back, and went down to investigate. Then a police car appeared and I judged it was time to make myself scarce.

I went cautiously up the passage and plunged into a warren of back alleys. I found myself in two cul-de-sacs and nearly fell into a tidal creek before I saw the Dolphin's hanging sign.

Late as it was, the bar was still lit up, and when I rang the bell, the door was opened by the barman who had served me three hours earlier.

Judging by the way he stared, he was surprised to see me. Was it because he, like Elva Peterson, had ideas about my being face-down in the harbour mud by now?

"I'll get my bags first," I said. "They're still in the car. . . . I suppose you've a garage?"

"Round at the back. But you can leave your car in the park if you like."

I went over for my bag and briefcase. I'm not sure what aroused my suspicions in the first place; a faint suggestion of warmth, perhaps, as I opened the car door. I lifted the bonnet. The engine was more than warm—it was hot.

I stood there like a fool for half a minute. Why had I left the door unlocked? Why had I left the ignition key dangling from the dashboard? Because, I suppose, I'd only intended in the first place to look into the Dolphin to see if Chalmers was there.

I walked round to the back of the car. There were two holes in the rear panel, and a long groove cutting into the fabric of the hood.

The hairs at the back of my neck were like hog's bristles. You naturally prefer not to use your own car to kill your victim—but there is something deadly and malicious about using his.

I went back to the Dolphin, and after a while I turned in. But I couldn't sleep. I dozed uneasily between two o'clock and three, then came wide-awake and knew I was wasting my time trying to drop off again. It was still dark when I dressed and quietly left the pub by a side door.

The tide was out. A curtain of mist

"Is that coffee I can smell again?"

hung so low and close that I couldn't see the deep water channel. Swallow, Elva Peterson's boat, was leaning over at a tipsy angle. I clambered carefully down the ladder and thumped on the cabin top.

A rumpled head peered out. She looked sleepy and warm and even younger than I'd thought last night. "So it's you again," she said quickly. "Come in and shut the hatch."

"You heard those shots?" I asked.

"Yes."

"It was your own gun you heard." I told her what had happened in Brandy Staithe.

"You didn't see anyone in the car? Not clearly enough to recognize them again?"

"I didn't even realize it was my car," I said. "I want to get out to Warren Chalmers's boat."

She shrugged. "I'll take you, if you really want to go."

She got up from the bunk, unfastening the cord of her dressing-gown. I turned away. When I looked at her again she was wearing grey slacks and her white sweater, and was pulling on a duffel coat.

We went into the mist and climbed the ladder to the quay. A hundred yards nearer Brandy Staithe we came to a ramshackle landing-stage and several small boats, more or less afloat.

"That's one of Ollett's," she said, pointing. "He won't mind."

We got into the boat, and she started to row slowly and quietly towards the channel. The mist was thicker as we got farther out. . . .

Flirtation was a long, clean-lined vessel obviously designed for speed. The windows of the big deck-house saloon were curtained, but through them I could see the glow of lights. Elva climbed aboard. I followed, and found her staring at a dinghy drifting, its painter curving to the stern.

Elva went down three steps into the saloon and stood just inside, her back to me. Looking past her, I could see that the saloon was really spacious, lined with some pale, beautifully grained wood. Then she moved aside and sat down without a word, and I saw what she had been looking at.

Round the corner to the right was a miniature cocktail bar. In front of it, slumped on the thick carpet, was Warren Chalmers.

The shock lasted a minute or so. When I got a grip on myself, I pushed past Elva and knelt down beside Chalmers. His head was lying on a dark, crusted-looking mass of something that had stained the carpet like a gigantic red ink-splash. A couple of feet away a half-empty bottle had similar stains on its label.

It seemed as if Chalmers had been mixing drinks when he was struck over the head. There was an uncorked bottle of gin on the shelf of the bar, with a glass beside it three parts full. Halfway across the floor was a second glass, empty on its side but showing a dark sediment, and a cocktail cherry had rolled under the nearest chair.

Nothing else helped. There was no sign of any struggle.

I thought quickly. "How long will this fog last?" I asked Elva. "Long enough for us to get back without being seen?"

"Maybe." She was very pale.

"Then I think we ought to go."

"To the police, you mean?"

I'd been trying to work that out. I suspected that I had been meant to find Chalmers dead. Going to the police was the obvious sequel. That could have been planned, too, and I didn't care for playing a part in this affair that had been written for me.

"I'm not sure," I said. "I don't think so, yet. We seem to be out of this act. I think we should stay out. Did you touch anything coming in?"

She didn't answer. I remembered the way she had come down those steps, her right hand resting against the polished woodwork. I wiped the panelling with my handkerchief. . . .

I wouldn't have believed I could eat, knowing Chalmers to be dead less than half a mile away. But I made a good breakfast at the Dolphin, served by a

CONSCIENCE—4

There is another man within me that's angry with me.

Sir Thomas Browne

cheerful girl I hadn't met before. As I ate, I sat and thought. If that neat and rather theatrical setting on board Flirtation was a trap, I'd avoided it. I was still free to find out, if possible, why Chalmers had sent for me.

Free, also, to give Vanessa all the help I could. If she needed help. . . .

After breakfast I went up to my room and collected Elva Peterson's gun. The sooner it was back in her possession the better I'd be pleased. I didn't want to risk anybody finding it in mine. I went down again and, on my way out of the hotel, I met the barman. His name, Elva had told me, was Gribble.

"I believe you knew the gentleman, sir?" he said softly.

"What gentleman?" I asked.

"Mr. Chalmers. The husband of the lady you were talking to last night. Seems he's been found dead."

"Good God!" I said. "*Dead?*"

"Murdered, they say." The shadow of a smile crossed Gribble's face.

I left the Dolphin and turned down Brandy Staithe to the quay. Across the bright reach I could see Flirtation with a squat police launch beside her.

The estuary shimmered under the sun. Elva was sitting on Swallow's cabin top, and the stocky young man I had seen talking to her last night was doing something to the engine.

Shielding her eyes from the sun, she told me to come down. "Ollie," she said, "this is Mr. Cradford." She glanced at me. "Didn't I mention Ollett last night?"

"I think you did."

"He knew Mr. Chalmers."

"You looked after his boats?" I asked.

"You could call me ground staff. I'd plenty to do," Ollett said.

"I suppose you've lost your job now he's dead?"

"Too early to say. Maybe you're right. I worked for Chalmers, not his wife." Ollett stowed the oily rag in a corner of the engine well. "I don't think I should like working for his wife. I'm damn sure I wouldn't."

I let that go. I said: "Have you talked to the police yet?"

"They've talked to me."

At that moment a big man in a dark-grey suit came ponderously along the quay and looked over. "Mind if I come down, Miss Peterson?" he said. He came down, the boat perceptibly tilting as he shifted his weight to the deck. "And this is Mr. Cradford, is it not?"

"That's right," I said, "though how you know it I can't imagine."

"They told me you were coming this way." He added: "I'm Watkins—of the county police."

"This is where I came in," Ollett said. "You haven't thought up anything else for me, Inspector Watkins?"

"Not yet, my boy. Perhaps later."

"I'll not be far away." Ollett nodded to Elva and to me and swarmed up the ladder.

"I don't see why you need me, either," I said.

"Well, sir," Watkins said, "last night you took a room at the Dolphin. You asked if Mr. Chalmers was on the premises or was expected to come in. . . ."

"Who told you that?" I demanded. I realized that if Inspector Watkins had indeed been given that information, someone was definitely trying to link me with Chalmers's death.

"Now, now, we mustn't take umbrage, sir. Later you encountered Mrs. Chalmers in the bar and left with her." Watkins's gaze was bright and bland. "Surely my interest in you isn't difficult to understand?"

"My interest in Chalmers isn't difficult to understand either," I told him. "I happened to find myself in Melhaven last night. Knowing Chalmers of old, I imagined he'd make a pub like the Dolphin his local."

"Yes, of course, yes." He seemed to be thinking that over, nodding his head repeatedly. "You're here in Melhaven as a casual visitor?"

"Just passing through. Taking a few days' holiday."

He nodded. "Just passing through. To where, Mr. Cradford?"

I stared at him. "What the devil do you mean?"

Watkins scratched his head. "Well, I've been living hereabouts for thirty years or so, and I'm blessed if I know where you could be passing through *to*, so to speak. You have to come a good eight miles out of your way to get here and go eight miles back to get out, Melhaven being, as one might say, built on a peninsula formed by the mud brought down by the Mel."

"I felt like coming and I came," I said.

"I see. Just following your fancy, as it were? Been away from home long, sir?"

"Not long."

"When did you make a start, sir?" I said: "I started yesterday."

"About what time?"

"Oh, half-past one . . . two o'clock."

"And your home is—let me see—Leamsford? I got that from the hotel register, sir." He smiled. "It would be about what—a hundred and fifty miles from there to Melhaven and you were in the Dolphin just before eight? You were just cruising around, taking a few days' holiday, not caring much where you fetched up for the night. But you couldn't have been here much sooner if you'd come straight here and

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wanted to do the trip quickly, could you, sir?"

I said nothing and he looked at me thoughtfully. "Now while we're on the question of times, sir, when would you say you got back to your hotel last night?"

"About one o'clock. Within a few minutes either way."

"And you left the Dolphin with Mrs. Chalmers and her party at"—he flicked over the leaves of a small notebook—"just before ten o'clock? So you must have stayed at The Golden Lantern quite a while, sir."

I could see it coming again. "About a quarter of an hour," I said grimly.

"Say ten minutes' drive to Chanter's Wharf. Plus quarter of an hour there. I make that ten twenty-five. And you reached the Dolphin about one o'clock? Well, well." Watkins shook his head sadly.

"It was a pleasant night," I said. "I was walking around."

"For two and a half hours? During that time, of course, you went in nowhere, you saw no one who might recognize you and support your statement?"

"Inspector, how did you guess?"

"It's the usual thing," he said unhappily. "I'd never have mentioned it, sir, but Mr. Chalmers was killed some time between seven and eleven last night. That's as close as they'll put it—and you were first seen in the Dolphin at eight o'clock."

"What happened between seven and eight doesn't concern me," I said evenly. "I wasn't here."

"No? You certainly didn't go into the pub before then, but I've only your word that you didn't arrive in Melhaven before that time."

"You can't have it both ways, Inspector. On your own showing, I couldn't have got here much earlier. And it isn't likely that I should have made straight for Chalmers's boat. I couldn't have known he'd be there."

"But he came ashore, sir, shortly after he brought Flirtation into the river. He was seen rowing ashore in the dinghy by at least three people—one of whom was Ollett."

"Then if he came ashore, how the devil does it happen that he's been found dead on his boat?"

"Obviously he returned, sir."

"Well, I think you can wash out the earlier period," I told him. "I drove straight into town and parked my car against the church. People were about. If necessary, I think I can prove what I'm saying."

"I'm inclined to agree with you, sir. But ten twenty-five and eleven. . . ."

I had no answer to that. But Elva Peterson had. She said: "Suppose *I* can account for Mark's hurry to get here from Leamsford—and for the way he spent his time last night?"

"I'd be very interested, Miss Peterson."

ELVA lit a cigarette, tried to blow a smoke ring and failed. She said: "Mark knew my brother—and we used to see a lot of each other in London, didn't we, Mark? Well, I wrote to him and told him I was here, and he came. I said I'd meet him at the Dolphin. We didn't publicly fall on each other's necks, of course. People *talk*, don't they?"

"They do indeed," the inspector agreed.

"Mark knew the Chalmers were living here, and naturally they were the last people on earth he wanted to see—I mean, his having had a crush on Van Chalmers at one time. That's why he asked about Warren Chalmers—not because he wanted to see him but because he didn't.

"Then he slipped out of the bar to reserve a room and we had a word in the corridor. He told me Chalmers was likely to turn up any minute so we'd better get out just as soon as he'd finished his drink. But, before he could do that, Van Chalmers turned up and he couldn't do anything but go back to Chanter's Wharf with them. But he cut it as short as he could. He was with me from half-past ten till nearly one o'clock."

"May I ask where?"

"Right here on my boat." Elva flushed, the colour spreading over her face and throat, and I tried to look as confused as any man should, in those circumstances.

The inspector nodded heavily. "If that's so, Mr. Cradford, then your horizon brightens considerably."

"I'm relieved to hear it."

"Later we'll have to go into details, and I'll be obliged if you don't leave the district for the time being."

Watkins climbed out of sight. Elva turned into the cabin and I followed, leaning against the door and looking down at her. I said: "I don't know where all this is going to end, but thanks all the same. Fortunately for me you're the most accomplished young liar I ever met."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Cradford."

I took the gun out of my pocket and gave it to her. Without a word she put it in the locker. I said: "By the way, you slipped up on one point. I didn't inquire after Chalmers in the Dolphin last night, so the involved reasons you gave Watkins for my doing so was so much wasted effort."

"Oh!" She was visibly crestfallen. "Then why didn't you deny it when he told you?"

"There didn't seem much point. I can't prove I didn't. And it's useful to know that somebody there is sufficiently interested in my downfall to tell the police a deliberate lie. I wonder who?"

"Gribble," she said. "The piggy-eyed barman. He was the one who used the phone when you came and again when you booked a room. . . ."

Leaving Elva for the second time that day had a curious effect on me. The Mark Cradford of yesterday morning already seemed a thousand miles away in space and ages away in time. But now alone again, I felt as if I had at least some relationship with him.

And that was necessary. There were problems that Mark Cradford, of Leamsford, had to deal with himself. He couldn't delegate them to a hybrid creature who fired shots in the night and was now down in police records as a middle-aged wolf who prowled in a young girl's cabin at one o'clock in the morning.

First, I had to see Vanessa. Privately.

I walked to Chanter's Wharf. The riverside road went past The Golden Lantern towards open country to the east of the estuary.

I came to the drive that led to the front entrance. Encountering a young man in purple livery, I asked for Mrs. Chalmers, and he took me through the lobby to a door marked *Strictly Private*. There he rang a bell and a maid appeared.

She vanished, then returned and took me into a room smaller than, but just as sumptuous as the one I had entered last night.

Vanessa came in. She wore an expensively artless black dress that made her look more like a twenty-year-old virgin than a thirty-year-old widow.

"I've heard about Warren," I said. "I'm sorry, Van."

"Once," she said, "you would have been impulsive and unsophisticated enough to say you were glad."

"Well, we get older. And I don't know what the position was between you and Warren. . . ."

"Strained," she admitted.

Lighting her cigarette, I said: "I suppose you've had the police here?"

"Within half an hour of Warren being found. I'm expecting them again this afternoon."

"I don't have to remind you that I'm a lawyer, Van—with no great experience in criminal matters, perhaps, but I may be able to help. If so, you've only to say the word."

"That's nice of you." She smiled at me. "But I don't think it's going to be necessary. Warren had activities I know nothing whatever about. His—his death must belong to all that. There was a side of his life I've never shared. He wouldn't let me. I told the police so."

I went to the window. For a minute I stared out at the smooth lawns, and the chrysanthemums on the borders. I said: "I'd better tell you, Van. I'm not in Melhaven by accident. Yesterday morning I'd had a letter from Warren. He was in trouble—something pretty wide and deep—and he wanted my help."

"But that—that's *absurd*, darling. Oh, I don't mean anything disparaging, Mark. I know you'd always be willing to help anyone. But he had his own lawyers."

"Naturally. And, like everything else, they'd be the best he could buy. But if he's been up to any tricks, I can understand why he came to a provincial nobody—someone who'd help him for your sake, if not for his."

Vanessa said in a low voice: "Have you told the police?"

"Not yet. I wanted you to know first."

She put her hands over her face. "Mark, can't you forget all this? The police are the people to find out who killed him. It isn't your job. Even if he—if he *was* mixed up in something we know nothing about, must it be dragged out now? After all, he's dead."

I don't know what I expected. Certainly not what happened. She got up and went to the door and said: "Will you wait a moment, Mark?"

I WAITED more than any moment. As the minutes passed, I knew something had gone wrong, that the thin crust of events was breaking under me and that I was slipping down into something extremely unpleasant and dangerous.

When Vanessa came back, Joel Reardon was with her and close behind them was the golden-haired Ross Malin. It was Malin who shut the door. There was a half-smile on his face and I didn't like it.

"Mark," Vanessa said, "Ross and Joel were great friends of my husband. I couldn't keep this from them. They know all about Warren."

"A lot more than you think," Joel Reardon said with unpleasant emphasis.

I was angrier than I remembered being for a long time; with myself, for not taking better precautions to ensure that I was talking to Vanessa and not a committee, and with her for revealing what I'd said.

"Well, as Vanessa's seen fit to drag you into it," I said, "I'll be quite frank. Warren asked for my help and, even if he's the other side the Styx, he's damn well going to have it. I never liked him—but I like murder less."

"This letter Warren is supposed to have written," Martin said in a butter-smooth voice. "Do you have it with you?"

"He asked me to destroy it and I did."

He nodded. "Too bad! Because without that letter, you've no motive for being in Melhaven at all. If, that is, we except Vanessa."

"I don't quite know what you mean, Ross," she said.

"A man doesn't wait six years and then go to theatrical lengths to kill the man who married his fiancée," I said. "If that's what you're implying."

"I don't suggest a long vendetta." Malin's smile broadened. "But you could easily have met Warren accidentally and preserved a façade of friendliness for a while—you know what I mean? The way civilized people do. And then, stung by some remark he made, you killed him in the heat of the moment. . . ."

To be continued next week

MY BROTHER Bob

AT school, Bob, who was a fat little boy, hated games. But apart from this, he was a lively boy. He was very astute and, I always thought, had the makings of a great business man.

Whenever a "craze" started up among the boys Bob tried to get wind of it before it was under way. Then he rushed out and bought up the essential things for the craze, selling them to his friends and making a considerable profit for himself.

He even went so far as to start his own private "tadpole farm" with the idea of hatching the small creatures out, starting a "frog craze" and selling at high prices.

When it came to lessons, Bob had more ideas up his sleeve. One of these impressed me particularly. Some days before an examination he started to wear an eye-patch. The teachers soon got used to seeing my brother wearing this and no comment was made when he entered the examination room with one eye covered.

It was an examination in history, and inside the eye-patch Bob had written down all the important dates. Every so often, under the pretence of relieving the irritation, he moved the patch a little from his eye. He passed the examination with high marks.

The next paper was in three days' time and, foolishly, Bob told the other boys what he had been doing. The examiner was very surprised to see nine boys sitting in front of him, all wearing eye-patches.

While he was still at school he became badly bitten by the stage bug. He badgered agents and theatre managements all day to give him a part—with little sign of success.

One day, however, he was lucky. In Kelsey Park, Beckenham, a little girl fell off the bridge into the lake and my brother, who cannot swim but has a fine sense of dramatics, jumped in and fished her out.

A medal for courage was later presented to him on the stage of the Penge Empire. Instead of making a modest speech of thanks, Bob, seeing his chance of holding an audience, launched into a fifteen-minute patter act which scored a record number of laughs.

Of course, the audience could hardly sit there silent when they were supposed to admire the boy's courage. Bob, however, took it all as a sign that he was at last successful.

WHO IS THIS FAMOUS BROTHER? See page 46

Permission to marry

Continued from page 13

or a place to live in. The girl, he added, was needed at home to look after her invalid mother.

They should wait, Rumbold decided. Young love was delightful, but marriage needed solid foundations, like the summer-house he was having built as a garden study. He glanced at Ashburton, whose walrush moustache was also giving the thumbs-down.

But Eileen Meakin was talking, as usual.

"There seems to be no reason why you young people can't wait eighteen months, when you'll be able to do as you like."

"But Miss, Harry has the offer of a wonderful job in the Midlands," the girl said eagerly. "If he could take me to look after him we'd save more than if I stayed at home. And we don't want to be parted. I can't bear the thought of him going to a strange town alone."

"Absence is supposed to make the heart grow fonder," said Eileen Meakin, smiling.

As a literary man, Rumbold disliked tags. It dawned on him that he had been wrong. In spite of her lovers' lane, Eileen Meakin was against young love, no doubt because she was a middle-aged spinster whom romance had by-passed while she was busy meddling in the affairs of others.

He shifted ground a little. It didn't do to be too hasty, and as a novelist he favoured happy endings wherever possible. On looking at the father more closely he wasn't impressed. The man's eyes were too small, his mouth too tight.

"We'll hear what the young man has to say," he suggested.

Miss Meakin frowned. "If you insist. . . ."

"Just take this down in longhand today, Miss Dawson. I'm in a hurry"

THE young man said he was a carpenter, able to earn £12 a week when not stood off, but the building trade was seasonal, which was why he was transferring to furniture.

"Twelve pounds a week and you haven't anything saved?" Miss Meakin made it sound like a crime.

"I've only been out of the army two months, Miss. We'll have enough to keep us."

"With nowhere to live?"

"We'll find somewhere. We don't expect everything served on a plate."

A worthwhile youngster, in these days when they were spoon fed. Rumbold's heart warmed to him. Carpenters were the salt of the earth. He had two in his garden, building his summer-house, when they weren't sharing a bottle of pale ale with him.

His instinct told him these lovers would build together like birds in a tree. But Miss Meakin had whispered to George Ashburton and was now looking at him with "Application refused" trembling on her lips.

"Let's retire and talk it over," he said.

Miss Meakin looked annoyed, but old Ashburton kept a bottle of sherry in the justices' room and had risen with alacrity.

They refused his offer of a glass.

"Shouldn't we let them get on with it and learn to make their own mistakes?" Rumbold asked reasonably. "The father struck me as a type who'd keep the girl tied to chores he could pay to have done. The big thing is that the mother wants them to marry."

"Talked into it," rumbled Ashburton.

"Or too unselfish, like most mothers," amended Miss Meakin. "As an invalid she may see herself as a millstone round the girl's neck, but children have a duty."

"So have parents," argued Rumbold. "That boy will make a fine husband, if he isn't left on the loose for a year and a half in a strange town."

"It might give the girl a chance to change her mind, Mr. Rumbold. What can she know about love, at nineteen?"

"At what age does one know?" Rumbold retorted. "Are you or I in any position to enlighten her—or to generalize? There's no serious impediment to the marriage as far as I can see."

"You've never been able to see very far, and short-sight on the Bench can be very harmful."

"That's intolerably rude. I——"

Ashburton butted in. "You rather asked for it, Hugh, telling a woman she doesn't know anything about love. They are all experts, bless 'em, and I'm inclined to rely on Miss Meakin's judgment."

"You have three married daughters," Rumbold reminded him. "Did you stand in their way?"

"The youngest was thirty before I got her off my hands," Ashburton said. "These applications are deuced tricky. When there's something to be said for both sides, it's wise to play safe."

"So far we've heard mostly Miss Meakin's side."

"That's strange," she flashed, "because I would have said your voice was by far the louder. I've noticed it before when you can't have your own way."

The unfairness of this attack shook him. "Woman's logic!" he complained bitterly to Ashburton. "Cross them, and they become personal. I'm here to do my duty as a magistrate."

"You'd have sided with the father," Miss Meakin accused, "if I'd been for them. You're opposing *me*, because I poured cold water on your absurd idea of putting a children's playground in the old people's rest garden."

"You'd put it in the park?" Rumbold cried. "Across the main road? Of all the crazy. . . !"

Ashburton put his glass down with a bang. "I've never heard anything like this, outside a husband and wife assault case," he declared. "For five years, to my knowledge, you two have been hard at it. Why don't *you* get married? Then I'd grant a judicial separation that would keep you apart and give us some peace."

They were stunned into silence. Rumbold couldn't have been more shocked. This was appalling. The constable outside the door would spread the news of a justices' quarrel. Rumbold knew he would have to give way, to end it. Better a delayed wedding than a breach of the peace.

He drew a deep breath, but Eileen Meakin spoke first.

"After that astonishing outburst," she said icily, "I feel that anything Mr. Ashburton advises must be wrong. Therefore I'm prepared to join you in a majority decision, Mr. Rumbold. You are a man of wide experience and broad humanity. We'll let them marry."

"Thank you, Miss Meakin," said Rumbold gravely. "You and I are able to indulge in the necessary give and take of legal polemics without becoming offensive, like some people."

They both looked at old Ashburton, who helped himself to more sherry. "Have it your own way," he grunted.

They filed into court and gave their blessing. In the eyes of the young couple was a light that sent Rumbold home in a mellow mood. The victory was his, and he thought more highly of Eileen Meakin because she had given in gracefully. Misguided and obstinate she might be, but—a dour fighter.

It was odd that such a pretty, intelligent woman had never married. A strong-minded man could make something of her, and get a lot of fun out of it. . . .

Fun? Out of marrying Miss Meakin? That was the curse of a writer's imagination. Any man marrying Eileen Meakin would be crazy. She was all head and no heart, as her attempt to blight young love had proved.

Unable to work, Rumbold strolled into the garden to see how his summer-house was shaping. The two carpenters had become three, and he stared in amazement when he saw that the third was the bridegroom-to-be.

Equally startled, the boy stared back. "Didn't know this was your job, sir," he said. "The boss sent me along to help finish off. Renée and I would like to thank you. . . ."

Rumbold recovered himself and held out a hand.

"Good luck to you both, my boy," he said, "and I'd say you had it coming to you. But it was touch and go, in court."

"We had our fingers crossed, sir, but we weren't worried. Renée's one of Miss Meakin's old girls."

"Old girls?" Rumbold was mystified.

"Renée left school four years ago," the young carpenter explained. "But Miss Meakin keeps in touch with the old girls, and she told Renée it would be all right."

RUMBOLD retired to his study. It didn't make sense. If Eileen Meakin knew the girl—and it was wrong of her to adjudicate if she did—why had she opposed the application? If there was any serious objection she wouldn't have changed her mind, so the whole business was decidedly fishy.

Confound the woman! She kept coming between him and the next chapter of his book, so he studied the council minutes instead and saw that a third site had been mooted for the children's playground — the practice green of the municipal golf course. He visualized the slaughter of the innocents by sliced drives from the first tee.

This was where he and Eileen Meakin must pull together again. It would also be an opportunity to settle the other matter. . . .

She was in her garden, destroying an ants' nest. In a large sun hat, a cotton frock and outsize gardening gloves, she made him think what a pity it was such an attractive woman should spend so much energy obliterating the work of others.

"Oh, Mr. Rumbold. . . ." She flushed, and he thought he detected a note of guilt. "What brings you?"

"I didn't know you were a friend of the bride," he said bluntly.

She looked down at the ants. "They always appear at this time of the year," she sighed. "I can't get rid of them. . . ."

"Or me, until you answer a question. Why did you oppose the application?"

She hesitated. "Because I knew you'd have opposed it if I'd supported it," she confessed. "With Mr. Ashburton you'd have been two to one, so I had to lay it on thick, to get you rattled. I'm—very sorry."

"You aren't," he said angrily. "It was most unethical and unjust. You make me sound a stupid, prejudiced crabby old fool. . . ."

"I've said I'm sorry," she whispered. "You're rather a dear, but for five years we've enjoyed ourselves, striking sparks off one another and . . . I didn't want the young people to suffer. They're so much in love. Please forgive me."

Rumbold didn't know whether he should. He took a turn round the lawn, and came face to face with her again. That was a mistake. She was smiling at him.

"It's time we were friends, Hugh," she said. "Stay to lunch."

"I don't want to be friends with you," he snapped back automatically. "That is, I. . . ."

He stopped short. Then he said: "Oh, Eileen, I'm such a bad-tempered old boor. You can't possibly want me to. . . ."

She was still smiling. His voice trailed away.

"Now, Mr. Rumbold," she said briskly, "don't try to tell me what I want or don't want. I won't be dictated to."

She took his arm. And Rumbold, as he suffered himself to be led towards the house, remembered that absurd remark of old Ashburton's: *Why don't you get married?*

Suddenly, surprisingly, it didn't seem nearly so absurd. THE END

MY BROTHER BOB

See page 45

Bob Monkhouse, the famous television broadcaster and scriptwriter, is the brother of Mr. John Monkhouse

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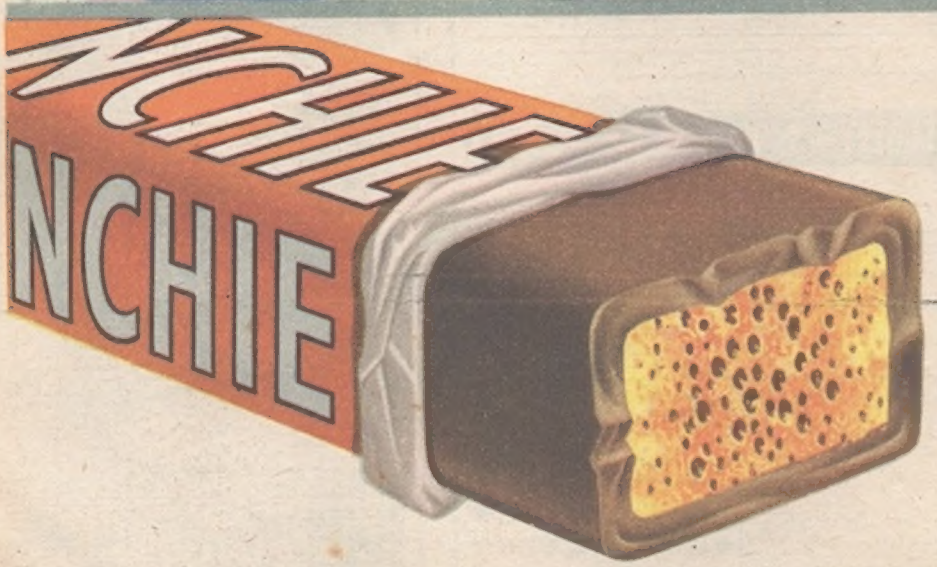

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